

Granta School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134937
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	360659
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Ilott
Headteacher	Simon Bainbridge (acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Sixteen lessons and 11 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, safeguarding documentation, school policies and 66 parental questionnaires.

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

- The achievement of different groups of pupils.
- How effectively assessment data is used for target setting and lesson planning.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

Information about the school

Granta School was opened in 2006. It is an area special school for pupils across Cambridgeshire with a range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many of the pupils have profound and multiple learning needs, some are on the autistic spectrum and some have emotional and behavioural difficulties. About a fifth of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and a small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. One of the deputy headteachers has taken over as acting headteacher from September and there is a new leadership team in place. The school has recently achieved the Sportsmark award and the Financial Management Standard in Schools award.

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

This is a satisfactory school, which is improving. The outstanding level of care provided helps pupils to successfully overcome their complex learning and physical difficulties so that they achieve satisfactorily. They make sound progress in their learning, and good progress in their personal and social development. Pupils behave well as a result of consistently applied behaviour management techniques and the high standard of support and guidance pupils receive from all members of staff. The calm purposeful way in which pupils' personal, social and medical needs are met can clearly be seen to have a positive impact on the way relationships develop in the school. Pupils are tolerant of each other and there is a harmonious ethos. There are a few instances of bullying, but pupils regard these incidents as being dealt with well by staff. Pupils lead healthy lives and grow in confidence and self-esteem during their time in the school. They make a good contribution to the community by acting as school council representatives and raising money for charity. The sound progress made in developing communication skills, together with excellent opportunities for older students to learn about how to manage money and to experience the world of work, prepare them well for life after school.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good lessons seen. Staff are committed and dedicated. Occasionally, in lessons the pace of learning is too slow, and the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place but is not rigorous enough to enable all teaching to reach the quality of the best. The school gathers data about the progress made by individual pupils but has been slow in collating and analysing this data so it can be used to compare the progress of different groups and rates of progress over time. However, plans are in place to improve these systems. The highly personalised curriculum is relevant to the different learning needs of pupils, with appropriate emphasis on different forms of communication and sensory experiences.

A new senior leadership team was appointed at the beginning of term. A deputy headteacher is now acting headteacher while the headteacher has taken up a secondment opportunity. The roles of the team members are currently being established and embedded. Despite these recent staffing changes, senior leaders have taken on extra responsibilities and carried them out well to ensure the smooth running of the school. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding with clear, focused targets for improvement. The capacity for sustained improvement in the future is satisfactory and the school is going in the right direction.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by:

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- improving the consistency of teaching of literacy and numeracy
- sharing good practice across the school.
- Ensure rigorous systems of monitoring and evaluation which include lesson observation by subject leaders.
- Make more effective use of the tracking information gathered in lessons to set targets, plan future learning and make useful comparisons with national benchmarks.
- Up to 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.

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

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is well below average. They make good progress in improving their behaviour and developing personal and social skills. Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to follow instructions and participate particularly enthusiastically in practical activities. They appreciate what the school is doing to help them and, in turn, are sometimes able to support and each other. However, attainment remains well below the national average because of the nature of the pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, it has not been graded in this report.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress in lessons whatever the nature of their special needs and/or disabilities and, those who are able to, make steady progress in their reading. By the time they reach Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, all students take some form of external accreditation and some have been successful at GCSE and Entry Level certificates. The school has not analysed its assessment data to check that pupils from different groups are making similar rates of progress to others nationally.

Pupils know they need to eat fruit and vegetables to keep healthy and they understand they need to exercise. Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in school. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, and use tools and resources sensibly in lessons. Attendance is above average and is monitored well by the school.

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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	
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
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour well. They defuse difficult situations and avoid confrontation through positive reinforcement and effective use of praise and encouragement. This gives learners clear expectations for both behaviour and learning. The staff know pupils' needs well and usually focus on respecting the pupils and fostering their independence and their right to choose different options. However, occasionally during the inspection, staff were over-zealous in directing pupils which prevented them learning for themselves. Teachers made good use of a range of resources, including computers, to engage and involve pupils in their learning. In the best lessons, teachers used a wide range of communication techniques, including signs and visual reinforcement, in order to involve all the pupils in their class. However, this was not consistent across the school. In weaker lessons, the pace of learning was too slow. The support from teaching assistants was not always used effectively and pupils were kept waiting too long in large groups instead of being more active in smaller groups. A few lessons started late and finished early reducing the time for learning. More able pupils were not always sufficiently challenged by being set interesting extra work to complete when they had finished the class task.

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The curriculum is good because it is tailored to meet the needs of every pupil according to their age and learning style. For example, the primary curriculum incorporates a multi-sensory learning programme, Key Stage 3 is skills-based and, for older students, learning is planned around externally accredited courses. There are excellent opportunities for some pupils to work for part of their time at the local primary and secondary schools, and some older students study vocational courses at the local college. Keeping safe and sex-and-relationships education are taught, as appropriate through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme. A wide range of clubs, sporting activities, swimming, horse riding and trips enrich the taught curriculum. However, taught time is shortened because of travel arrangements and the school does not always maximise the use of time when pupils are in school. Literacy and numeracy strategies are not consistently embedded across all classes.

Child protection procedures are in place and rigorous. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken and pupils themselves are encouraged to identify issues. Appropriate action is taken and monitored. Pupils receive highly individual care and therapy according to their need. Case studies demonstrate very effective efforts by the school to work collaboratively with other agencies to meet the needs of the pupils. Support for pupils' movements into school, between classes and onto the next stage of education is effective and well-managed.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has a range of appropriate policies to cover the different elements of safeguarding and welfare and meets all statutory requirements well. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are involved in its day-to-day work. They are developing a more challenging and strategic role in order to better hold the school to account.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through, for instance, outreach work to help other schools, fostering links with schools in Africa and pupils acting as representatives to the Youth Parliament for the area. Partnership working is a strength of the school and maximises the breadth of opportunities for pupils in a cost effective way. Equal opportunities are promoted well and the school has a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs. However, little analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils is carried out, and no impact assessment on race equality has been carried out by the governing body.

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

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Tracking and assessing progress and the use of data to bring about improvement are not consistent across the school. Senior leaders carry out lesson observation but subject leaders, who have the expertise to bring about specialist improvement, do not regularly carry out this form of self-evaluation. As a result, the school's own self-evaluation of its work, whilst satisfactory, is not fully focused on driving improvement in achievement. The new senior leadership team have a clear knowledge of where the school needs to develop.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress because learning is exciting and they are helped to work independently. They settle well at school as the result of the good links established with parents and there are plans to further develop these links. The good range of interesting resources makes playtimes and lessons fun. The outside play area is well-equipped and used effectively. The leadership of Early Years Foundation stage is outstanding and has ensured that planning of activities is well focused on the needs of each individual child and that clear priorities have been set for improvement. The provision for the children's welfare needs is outstanding.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form and grow in maturity and confidence. Some achieve external accreditation in a range of examinations and all students leave to go on to training or education placements. This is as a result of good quality careers education and preparation for work courses. A strong feature is the link with the local secondary school and college where some students are able to spend part of the week studying a range of courses to suit their individual needs. New opportunities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, are being introduced to make lessons more stimulating and practical and help to prepare students for independent life. Teachers keep records of students' progress but results are not collated or analysed so that comparisons can be made year on year.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children enjoy school, make progress and are well looked after. Inspectors' observations endorse these views. As one parent writes, 'For the time we have been in contact with the school we have found the staff to be extremely helpful, co-operative and to have the child's best interests at heart. We have been very impressed.' A very small minority of parents express concern about bullying and behaviour but inspection evidence shows that the school has dealt with these issues effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Granta 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 112 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	55	28	42	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	55	28	42	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	35	39	59	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	38	30	45	5	8	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	30	45	30	45	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	32	35	53	5	8	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	32	42	64	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)	21	32	37	56	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	41	31	47	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	38	35	53	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	36	35	53	3	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	41	35	53	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	44	33	50	0	0	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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



20 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Granta School, Cambridge, CB21 4NN

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 16 and 17 September. We enjoyed talking with you. Granta is a satisfactory school which is improving. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school.

You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; you behave well, are polite and friendly and kind to others.

You are making good progress in improving your personal and social skills, and developing self-confidence.

You work hard and make sound progress in your schoolwork. Some of you do well in your examinations.

You told us that you feel very safe in school and are very well looked after; there is excellent care and support for all of you.

Your school works in an outstanding way with local schools and colleges to make sure you have lots of opportunities.

Teaching is satisfactory and often good. You like and respect your teachers and teaching assistants.

You enjoy the good range of sports, arts and other activities provided for you in school and at lunchtime.

We thought the school could get even better if:

- all teachers used the same system to record how well you are getting on, and used this to make comparisons with pupils in other schools.
- senior teachers checked what was happening in lessons more, and shared the good practice with all teachers in the school.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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