

Lord Grey School

Rickley Lane, Milton Keynes, MK3 6EW

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- While senior leadership is good, not all staff in charge of subjects and areas are always systematic enough in checking practice across the school.
- Although teaching has improved since the last inspection, it is still not good enough to ensure that all students make good or better progress.
- Sometimes the work set by teachers does not suit students' individual needs well and does not enable them to make good progress.
- The work set for the most able students is not always demanding enough and not all teachers have high enough expectations of these students.
- In some lessons teachers do not check how well students are learning, nor do they adjust activities when needed to ensure that learning continues at a good pace for all.
- Although GCSE results have risen since the last inspection, some groups of students, including boys, students with special educational needs and students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, still do not make good enough progress.
- There is too much variability in the results and progress made across all groups of students and within subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The very good leadership of the headteacher has secured significant improvements in overall results since her appointment, especially for girls and in GCSE mathematics.
- Leaders across the school track achievement well and provide good support and guidance to ensure that students are increasingly successful.
- The governors support and challenge the school to improve further.
- The sixth form is good. It provides students with a wide range of opportunities for further study and they make good progress.
- A new behaviour policy has led to improvements across the school. The school is a calm, safe place where students can learn well.
- Different ages and groups of students mix and socialise well together and the school is a harmonious community.
- The student council allows students to have their say about the development of the school, which has led to improvements to the canteen and social spaces.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 part lessons, six jointly with senior members of staff. They also undertook learning walks focusing on behaviour and the provision for students with special educational needs or whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Meetings were held with four different groups of students, members of the governing body and a wide variety of staff, including senior and middle leaders. An inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 68 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Forty responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into consideration.
- Inspectors scrutinised examples of students' work and looked at various school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and planning, arrangements for staff performance management and professional development, data on students' progress, how the school makes use of the pupil premium and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Meinke, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carol Evatt	Additional Inspector
Janice Howkins	Additional Inspector
Roger Fenwick	Additional Inspector
Gordon Jackson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lord Grey School is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below the national average at 10%.
- The proportion of students supported through school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is slightly above the national average at 9%.
- Just above three quarters of students are White British; the remaining quarter are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is just above the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra money provided to the school by government) is broadly in line with the national average.
- There is a sixth form partnership with Sir Herbert Leon Academy which forms the Milton Keynes South Sixth Form.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that there are more good or better lessons by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan activities that are well matched to the needs of all learners, including the least able
 - ensure that planned activities offer a high level of challenge to the most able students and that they communicate high aspirations and expectations for these students
 - jointly plan lessons with additional adults to ensure that they are appropriately deployed to support learning well
 - use questioning to check students' understanding throughout lessons and adjust the lesson when necessary to ensure that all students make good progress throughout.
- Improve achievement so that it is good or better for all student groups and across all subject areas through:
 - ensuring more robust analysis of assessment information to track students' progress and identify where they are falling behind as early as possible
 - ensuring that target setting is suitably challenging and aspirational for all students and encouraging high expectations
 - setting clear expectations of how teachers make use of information about students when planning lessons.
- School leaders, particularly subject and area leaders, should ensure that monitoring is more systematic and robust in order to:
 - further challenge teaching that is not yet good enough to improve
 - ensure that school policies and staff training have a rapid and measureable impact through even more systematic and robust evaluation
 - ensure improvements in the way science is managed at Key Stage 4.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although standards are rising, achievement still varies too much between groups of students and subject areas, which is why it requires improvement.
- The proportion of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades (including English and mathematics) has risen steadily since 2009 and the gap between the school and all students nationally is closing rapidly.
- Most students, including girls and students who speak English as an additional language, improved their performance at GCSE in 2012 and for many attainment is above the national average. However, performance at GCSE remains below the national average for boys, students with special educational needs and students known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- Performance at GCSE for some subjects, including mathematics, increased significantly in 2012. However, for other subjects, such as design and technology and humanities, performance has decreased since 2011. In 2012 all students took a vocational course equivalent to GCSE in science; while the pass rate was high, the school acknowledges that this may not represent the best choice for many students and the school is reintroducing GCSE sciences.
- Sixth form students make better than expected progress and their achievement is good. This is partly due to a well-thought-out curriculum which makes appropriate use of vocational courses to meet the needs of students. Appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor achievement and attendance at the partner school.
- The effective use of assessment information to set targets and track progress is good and has secured improvements in achievement. Students know their target levels well and have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve. However, teachers do not always use assessment information well when planning lessons to support the most- and least-able students and consequently they do not make consistently good progress. Some target setting for the most able does not expect enough of them. Early entry for examinations is used appropriately and does not lower the final GCSE grade for able students.
- The school's Learning Support Unit provides good support for -students with special educational needs and their progress is now improving. The pupil premium is being used effectively to support lower attaining students and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable through extra resourcing, including one-to-one tuition. However, the current performance of these groups is below that of others in the school and the impact of the pupil premium is being carefully monitored by the governing body.
- Students are increasingly acquiring skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics across the curriculum. The school prepares students well for the next stages of their education or employment and only a very small minority leaves without a clear destination.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire agreed that their children made good progress at the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, there is still not enough good and excellent teaching across the school. School leaders are aware of the inconsistencies of teaching and are taking actions to address this.
- The majority of lessons observed by the inspection team featured good teaching, and in a small minority of lessons, outstanding teaching. For example, in an outstanding sixth form English lesson, students demonstrated confidence when using a variety of strategies to compare texts. The teacher had planned well to meet students' needs, systematically checking learning throughout the lesson, ensuring that students made outstanding progress.
- A feature of most lessons observed during the inspection was good relationships between students and adults and between each other which supports learning well. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson a student answering a question on the board was helped by his

peers to get to the correct answer. This is underpinned by good classroom management and routines such as sharp starts and ends to lessons. Students tackle challenging activities with relish.

- In the best lessons, there is good planning to meet the needs of all learners. Activities are tailored to meet the needs of all students to ensure that all make good or better progress. Group work is well planned. Teachers use questioning well to check learning and make changes to the lesson when necessary so that all students work at a good pace.
- In a minority of lessons observed teaching is not yet good enough and occasionally inadequate. Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not make effective use of assessment information to adapt activities to meet the needs of all students, including the most able. This means that too many did not make good or better progress throughout the lesson. In a few lessons, teacher talk continued for longer than necessary, slowing down the pace of learning. Teachers do always check how students are learning during lessons so that some students do not keep up while others are insufficiently challenged.
- There are good examples of lessons where disabled students and those with special educational needs are catered for through tailored activities, regular checking of their learning and the good planned deployment of additional adults. This enables them to make good progress. Where teaching requires improvement, planned activities are not well matched to students' needs and the use of additional adults has not been sufficiently planned for. On a few occasions, the teacher's expectations of these students are not high enough and students are given inappropriate tasks such as colouring.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and on occasions excellent. Teachers use their subject expertise and enthusiasm to motivate students during lessons. They demonstrate high expectations which result in students making good progress.
- The key skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics are being developed well across the school. There are good opportunities for the development of literacy across the school, for example through the use of key words during lessons and reading during tutor time.
- The quality of marking and feedback has improved since the last inspection. Students are aware of their targets and know what they need to do to improve.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire felt that their child was well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

Good

- The introduction of a new behaviour policy with clearly communicated high expectations and explicit consequences for poor behaviour has resulted in marked improvements. The school presents a calm, safe environment for learning. Almost all students behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Discussions with students indicate that behaviour has improved and is now typically good. This is because the headteacher and other leaders demonstrate a visible presence and check students' behaviour well. Students indicate that the behaviour policy is used consistently by staff, although some commented that action to tackle poor behaviour does not always happen as quickly as it could.
- Students feel safe and well cared for. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that students feel safe at school. Attendance has consistently improved since 2009 because of decisive actions taken by the school.
- A strong feature of the school is the good mixing of students across different ages and social groups. This is supported by mixed-age tutor groups where students from every year group come together. The student council provides students with an effective way of raising concerns and ideas with the leadership team and governing body. School records indicate that incidents of racism or homophobia are rare and discussions with students indicate this to be correct. Students indicate that there are high expectations of how they should behave outside of school and effective action is taken to reinforce this.

- Students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. This is reinforced through the curriculum and assemblies. The school records indicate that there are few incidences of bullying and that bullying is dealt with well if reported. The number of exclusions has reduced over recent years due to better management of low-level poor behaviour and better provision to meet the needs of some students.

The leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher demonstrates clear drive and ambition for her school and provides an excellent role model for her staff. Her leadership by example has resulted in many improvements across the school since her appointment. Leaders, particularly senior leaders, and the governing body are increasingly effective in providing challenge and driving school improvement.
- There have been significant improvements to the quality of teaching, for example in mathematics and in the sixth form, and decisive action has been taken to eradicate inadequate teaching. However, this decisive action, such as focused teacher support plans, is yet to be applied where teaching requires improvement in order to raise the quality to consistently good or better. The role of middle leaders is being developed so that they take a greater responsibility for the quality of teaching in their subject areas. Concerns about the quality of education in science are being addressed.
- Targets set for teachers are used appropriately to hold staff to account and raise standards. A number of teachers have been held back from moving on to the upper pay scale because their performance is not yet good enough. There is a good range of training for staff at all levels, which is closely matched to whole-school priorities and individual targets. The school does not always ensure that the impact of training is monitored closely enough. The governing body is informed of and involved in performance management and decisions about teachers' salaries.
- The headteacher, leaders and the governing body know their school well. The ways in which leaders assess how well they are doing and plan how to improve the school further are effective. However, monitoring is sometimes not systematic enough nor linked well enough to planning so that the impact of any action taken is quickly measured and further action taken if it has not been successful.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school. The school actively seeks independent, external review as appropriate and is open to advise.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides well-organised and effective opportunities for learning. The sixth form curriculum especially provides a good range of opportunities for students. Some aspects of the curriculum, such as the provision for science at Key Stage 4, have not met the needs of learners well and actions are being taken to address this. The school also plans to review the quality of tutor time as this is not always used to good effect. Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is improving and better addresses their needs than previously.
- The curriculum contributes well to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through consideration of other cultures during lessons and charity events.
- The school has formed good partnerships with parents and carers, including employing specific staff to work with parents and carers who do not engage well with the school. This is having a positive impact on the experience of some students, for example through improvements to their attendance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - governors increasingly challenge the headteacher and leaders of the school and are fully informed of current developments in the school, including the achievement and progress of students, use of the pupil premium and the quality of teaching
 - governors work well to ensure that the budget is managed efficiently
 - governors meet their statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding and the promotion of equality

- governors are keen to participate in training opportunities to develop their skills in holding the school to account.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110531
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	405292

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1441
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alicja Tomey
Headteacher	Dr Tracey Jones
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 June 2011
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