

Grappenhall Hall School

Church Lane, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 3EU

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2013

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		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement varies too much. A few students make good progress but many others do not make enough progress to catch up on previous underachievement.
- Too many students are entered for accredited courses that do not sufficiently challenge them. They get an increasing number of qualifications but not so in English and mathematics GCSEs.
- Although the majority of lessons are well taught the quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all students achieve well.
- Students' work could be enhanced by marking that more frequently offers guidance on how they could improve it.
- In some lessons work is not varied enough to allow all students to work with the same degree of independence.
- More needs to be done to encourage students to develop their writing skills across all subjects in the timetable.
- There is too much use of exclusion as a sanction. Too many students are excluded even when it is obvious that exclusion is not working as a deterrent.
- Improvements in teaching and achievement have been slowed by staff restructuring and severe financial restrictions.
- Governors are not sufficiently involved in evaluating the standards and the quality of teaching.
- Leadership and management require improvement. The role of subject leaders is not sufficiently well developed.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve well; they are well taught and, as a result, make good progress.
- Increasing numbers of students are gaining passes in GCSE examinations.
- Students are being given good opportunities to pursue work-based courses in college and with alternative providers.
- Staff morale is good. Change, especially in the context of staffing reductions has been sensitively managed. These changes are leading the school towards greater financial security and opening up opportunities for faster improvement.
- Many students achieve particularly well in art.
- Nearly all students improve on their patterns of attendance in previous schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons. None were jointly observed.
- Inspectors talked to individual students about their views of the school and the progress they were making.
- Inspectors talked with senior staff, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors listened to students read and talked with them about the work they were doing. They also looked at the work in their files and records of their progress.
- A wide range of documentation was looked at, including that relating to students' safety, their progress and plans for school improvement.
- No parents responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- No staff submitted responses to the voluntary Ofsted questionnaire during the inspection.
- On the first day of inspection the majority of students and teachers were out of school on pre-arranged activities. The majority of lessons were taught by teaching assistants or students.
- On the second day of inspection every effort was made to observe as many qualified teachers as possible. This meant that many observations were short.
- The timing of the inspection meant that Year 11 students who had completed their courses were no longer attending.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a school for students who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties that are sufficiently extreme to necessitate the need for them to have a statement of special educational needs. Students are drawn from a very wide geographical area; some, especially those being looked after children, come from neighbouring local authorities.
- Most students are of White British heritage. None speak English as an additional language.
- Very few students have attended this school for all of their secondary education. Most arrive part way through it.
- Most students attract the pupil premium, either because they are eligible for free school meals or because they are looked after children. The proportion of these students is about three times the national average. There are no children of service families. The pupil premium is additional government funding for these groups of students.
- Changes since the last inspection have revolved around a reduction in staffing as a result of smaller numbers of students. The school has re-started admitting pupils in Years 5 and 6. Girls have recently been admitted to what was formerly a boys' school. Boys significantly outnumber girls.
- The school is due to re-locate in the forthcoming year.
- Many Key Stage 4 students attend courses at the local college for part of each week. A few individuals are taught by alternative providers for parts of each week. These include Xpand, Shaw Trust, Instant Training, Progress Sport, Cornerstones, Military Leader and Fullagars.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so as to speed up progress by;
 - making sure that when teachers mark students' work they add helpful comments about whether they have moved towards their targets, met the lesson objective and what they need to do to improve their work
 - making sure that students are presented with work that is suitably varied to challenge them, whilst allowing them to work with as much independence as possible
 - making sure that all teachers promote better writing whenever they can.
- Improve the management of behaviour by finding alternatives to the use of exclusion as a sanction, especially when it becomes obvious that students do not consider it a deterrent.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders to encourage greater responsibility for improving teaching and learning in their subjects in order to raise standards
 - involving the governing body more in evaluating the effectiveness of the school
 - making sure that curriculum development focuses more strongly on raising standards in numeracy and literacy rather than gaining more, and frequently less demanding, qualifications.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of management maybe improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because there are too many inconsistencies in the progress that individuals and groups of students make. A few students make good progress but not enough of them. Systems for recording progress show when students are making expected progress but not when they are exceeding expectations.
- Students nearly always join the school with a long history of underachievement. Attainment on entry is nearly always low. Frequently this is not because of any significant learning difficulty; more often it is because of a poor attitude to learning and a reluctance to conform. Attainment on leaving nearly always remains below average because teaching is not consistently good enough to compensate for previous underachievement. No students last year left with higher grade GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- Most of the improvement in attainment in recent years is due to curriculum change rather than the raising of standards. Since the last inspection, students have been gaining many more qualifications than they used to. This ensures that nearly all leave with some form of accreditation. The range of GCSE courses is expanding and includes English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education and art. This is good but it hides the fact that standards in English and mathematics are not rising fast enough. Average points scores are rising rapidly but this is often through students following courses that lead to qualifications but which present them with little challenge.
- Not all of this curriculum change is counter-productive. Students are increasingly being well prepared for life after school through a good programme of courses that meet the needs of students.
- Students working with alternative providers make very similar progress to all others.
- Achievement in art is exceptional. It is a strength of the school. It gives many students a great sense of achievement, cause for celebration and some good cultural insights.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve well. The teaching of reading is good and they are well supported. They make good steps to catch up on work they have missed out on because of their difficulties in other schools.
- Variation in achievement is often the result of absence or exclusion.
- Girls have only recently been admitted and there are very few of them. Only limited data exists about achievement and progress but during the inspection they were achieving equally with boys.
- Students who attract the pupil premium tend not do as well as other students. Frequently their barriers to better learning are much greater than for other students. Looked after children in particular struggle. They account for a large proportion of exclusions and absences.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Some teaching is good, but the students need more teaching that is outstanding, or consistently good, to help them overcome their difficulties. Occasionally, there is a very big difference in students' attitude to learning as they move from lesson to lesson. This tends to show that students are not unwilling to learn when the work interests and engages them.
- In nearly all lessons, relationships between adults and students are friendly. This contributes significantly to the promotion of learning.
- In some lessons, there is insufficient focus on the promotion of literacy skills, especially writing. A few lessons are characterised by teachers presenting students with worksheets and cut and paste exercises, which help students to avoid writing rather than encouraging it.
- In a Year 10 geography lesson it was good to see students being challenged to write factually and to incorporate the drawing of a graph to represent migration. This reinforced important

mathematical principles. .

- The management of behaviour is usually good. Sometimes there are students in class who are experiencing considerable personal difficulties. In the main, teachers show that they have a good range of strategies to cope with these situations.
- Teaching assistants are usually very well deployed and contribute well to the education and care of students. They often form appropriate relationships with students, which significantly help them to achieve success.
- There is inconsistency in the way teachers mark and annotate students' work. There are good examples, where students are given good advice about how they are getting on and what they need to do to improve. There are other times where teachers make reference to presentation and effort rather than what has been achieved and what needs to be done to improve.
- In some classes there can be a very big difference in the ability of students. This is not consistently recognised by all teachers. A Year 10 group, for instance, has a reading age varying from six to 15 years yet all were presented with the same text and challenge in one of the lessons observed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Most students behave well most of the time. Behaviour requires improvement because a minority of students display unacceptable patterns of behaviour. A disproportionate number of these students are looked after children.
- There is too much use of exclusion as a sanction. Exclusions have been rising over the last three years. A very small minority of students have experienced repeated exclusion over the past year. When this happens it becomes increasingly clear that exclusion is not the ultimate sanction it is meant to be. Not enough is being done to establish alternatives to exclusion.
- In nearly all cases, students' attendance improves over the time they spend in this school. Sometimes this improvement is startlingly good. A few students, often those being looked after, persistently refuse to attend. The attendance of Year 5 and 6 pupils is particularly good and matches the national average for all schools. The attendance of Year 9 students is particularly poor.
- A few lessons are disrupted by bad behaviour. On occasions an individual student presents problems but other students rarely follow their lead. On the whole, classrooms are settled and students can get on with their work without undue distractions.
- Most students are open and happy to talk to visitors about their experiences. They say they feel safe and that the school is 'good enough'.
- A lot of time and effort goes into educating students about what constitutes a dangerous situation and how to avoid it. They know how to keep safe and how to avoid being bullied. They know about the different forms that bullying and discrimination can take. Most of the time they neither bully or are bullied but there are occasional exceptions.
- There are always a lot of staff on duty to make sure that students are kept safe and can always turn to an adult when they need support or comfort.
- School staff carefully monitor alternative providers to ensure the care and safety of students.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers understand the schools strengths and weaknesses well and have identified areas that need to be further developed. In recent years, improvement has been made harder because the school became financially insecure. Issues around this are now mainly resolved.
- The school has been very successful in helping ambitious teaching assistants to become fully qualified teachers. Newly qualified teachers are also well supported.
- Many staff have been at the top of their pay scales since before the current headteacher was

appointed. Given that teaching requires improvement it would appear that staff appraisal has not sufficiently ensured that all teachers have consistently maintained the standard for which they got promoted in the past. The situation is currently improving, with all teachers being set suitably ambitious targets for improvement.

- Leadership and management duties are shared fairly but not all subject leaders are sufficiently involved in evaluating the quality of teaching and students' achievement in their subjects.
- The local authority continues to offer appropriate support to the school. This support varies in quantity and frequency but is always well tailored to need and not over-intrusive.
- The monitoring and evaluation of students' progress is getting increasingly more sophisticated as the amount and quality of assessment information improves and leaders and managers grow more adept at analysing it. Assessment and monitoring of progress in Years 5 and 6 is particularly good.
- Safeguarding requirements are met. In the main, students experience equal opportunities but when work is not sufficiently varied to meet their needs this erodes that equality.
- The curriculum promotes social and moral values more comprehensively than spiritual and cultural ones. The exception is in art, where spirituality and culture are strongly promoted. Although there has been a considerable broadening of opportunities to gain qualifications, some of the courses being offered do not sufficiently challenge higher-attaining students. Good attention is paid to making sure that students gain extensive vocational experience in preparation for leaving school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very supportive of the work of the school. It relies overmuch on information provided by the headteacher about the quality of teaching and the achievement of students. This results in governors being aware of what is being done to raise standards and improve teaching but not contributing enough to the process. The governing body holds the headteacher to account through its role, shared with the local authority, in his appraisal and performance management. Several governors have received training in safeguarding and are careful to ensure that the school is a safe workplace. The governing body is currently under subscribed because it has difficulty in getting appropriate parental representation. The governing body has played a pivotal role in helping to stabilise the budget. The very large deficit built up when the school ceased to offer residential placements and lost its sixth form is shrinking. Governors check how pupil premium funding is spent but have not sufficiently checked for themselves the impact of the spending.

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	111501
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	401186

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	9–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Widdowson
Headteacher	Michael Frost
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2010
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