

Grappenhall Hall School

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

Inspection dates 4–5 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' attainment has improved and increasing numbers of students are achieving higher standards in English and mathematics.
- The majority of teaching is now consistently good and as a result, the majority of students are making rapid progress towards national standards.
- Most teachers use clear explanations and carefully worded questions to make sure students understand more complex ideas and can talk about what they know and understand.
- Most students behave well in lessons and around school. Teachers and teaching assistants support students who have difficulty managing their own behaviour well, so students can return to their learning quickly.
- Students say they feel safe in school and their teachers and parents agree they are well cared for and well supported in improving their behaviour.
- Leaders, managers and governors have taken decisive steps to improve teaching. Teachers and leaders have worked closely with a high achieving school to compare teaching and incorporate the good practice they have seen into their own teaching.
- The headteacher, senior leaders, managers and governors now expect their own students to progress at the same rates as students nationally. The progress of students in the school has increased as a result of higher expectations and better teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The small minority of students of the lowest ability and those with most challenging conditions are not yet progressing as quickly as the majority of students.
- Not all teachers are making explicit suggestions in their feedback on students' written work about what students need to do to improve, so students are not always able to move on to the next level rapidly.
- Not enough students are able to write clearly about what they know and understand, or write at the standard required in response to examination questions.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector saw nine teaching sessions or parts of lessons, taught by eight teachers. Two sessions were seen jointly by the inspector and the headteacher, and two further sessions were seen jointly by the inspector and the deputy headteacher.
- The inspector met formally with two groups of students and talked informally to students in lessons, at break and during lunchtime. She also discussed the school's work with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. She met with the Chair of the Governing Body and a governor who is also the assistant headteacher at Bridgewater High School, and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took into account the school's surveys of parents' and students' views about the school, and the views of 21 staff who completed questionnaires during the inspection. No parents responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- She observed the work of the school, including social time before school, breaks and lunchtime, including break and lunchtime activities. The inspector looked carefully at a wide range of students' work in their books and examination work displayed in classrooms, the school's records of students' progress and attainment, the school's evaluation of its own work and a number of school policies. She also looked closely at records relating to safeguarding, child protection, attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides education for students with a statement of special educational need for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- A very small number of students are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by pupil premium funding is above average. This is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those students who are looked after by the local authority.
- A very small number of students attend the school resource base which is designated provision provided by the local authority for students in Key Stage 2 who have a statement of special educational need for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school works closely with the local authority and is working in close partnership with Bridgewater High School, a local high achieving secondary school, to continue to improve the progress made by students in the school.
- The school will move into newly refurbished accommodation in February 2015.
- Some students arrive at the school at other times than in Year 7.
- A small number attend courses away from the school site at the local college and at Cornerstones College.
- Since the last inspection, the assistant headteacher has retired and has not been replaced.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so all students make rapid progress by:
 - teachers and teaching assistants using a wider range of resources to tailor the teaching carefully to the stages of learning of the lowest ability students and those with the most challenging behaviour
 - ensuring that when teachers mark students' written work, they give suggestions about how students can improve their understanding and knowledge
 - improving students' writing skills so all students can express their thinking and understanding, including in examination conditions.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership is good because leaders, managers and governors have effectively improved teaching, so more students now make good progress over time. The school's leaders, including subject leaders, compare progress of their students with the progress of students nationally, and set targets so students can continue to narrow the gap between the standards they can reach and national standards. This increase in expectations has been ably supported by leaders from the partner school.
- Assessments of students' progress are more accurate as a result of checking assessments with external partners. The collection and analysis of the accurate data enables the school to see clearly that the majority of students are making rates of progress similar to the progress of most students nationally.
- The school uses pupil premium funding firstly to fund additional teaching to accelerate progress both of those falling behind and those who have missed periods of education before arriving at the school, and secondly to provide support to improve attendance and behaviour. The small amount of Year 7 catch-up funding is used to add to the range of reading books that are used in the additional sessions to improve students' reading skills. The primary Physical Education (PE) and sports funding is used to pay for the weekly swimming sessions. One student in a swimming group spoke proudly of having learnt to swim within two weeks of arriving at the school. Overall, the use of the additional funding received by the school has increased the chances of all students to achieve well and is evidence of the school's strong commitment to all students having an equal chance to succeed.
- Students in the resource base settle quickly and their attendance improves, sometimes dramatically, as they begin to engage with learning as a result of well led provision. Teaching assistants support students well but do not always have the expertise to support the lowest attaining students.
- Students have the chance to follow a wide range of subjects in Key Stage 4 and a small number follow vocational courses in construction, car mechanics, hair and beauty or catering away from the school site. This extends the curriculum choice well. The curriculum develops students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. The religious education curriculum develops students' understanding of society through exploration of different beliefs and life styles so students understand how these can enrich our lives. The art curriculum enables students to explore and express their inner feelings, and discussions of literature in English help students to understand identity, relationships and human interaction.
- Most students move on to college courses when they leave the school and are well guided in accessing courses that will give them useful skills and qualifications for employment.
- The school monitors the attendance of students working away from the school site well. The leaders of the settings they attend speak very positively about students' behaviour. The courses they follow help them gain useful qualifications.
- The school is well supported by the local authority, by the partner school and by external consultants, for example, to improve marking and feedback to students about their work.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students and staff meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have been helped by an external review of governance to improve their knowledge of school data to demonstrate how well the school is doing, so they can challenge leaders and teachers to do even better. They now expect every subject leader to report how effectively they have improved teaching in their subject, and to show how students' progress has accelerated as a result. Governors have supported the headteacher well in setting up a system for managing the performance of teachers and teaching assistants so pay awards are linked closely to improved students' progress. They are aware which aspects of teaching enable students to learn increasingly well and how teachers are supported in ensuring their teaching includes those aspects so all teaching is of high quality. The governing body understands how additional funding is used and the headteacher reports to governors regularly on how much progress students have made, as a result of the extra teaching and support paid for with the additional funds.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Movement around the school is calm and orderly. Staff and students enjoy brief and positive conversations as they pass each other. Provision at lunch and break times allows students to make choices about where to spend their social and leisure time constructively; some enjoy quieter and more solitary activities, whilst others play football together outside. Classrooms and

equipment are well treated and displays of students' work around school remain pristine.

- The school's rewards system recognises good work and exceptional behaviour and motivates students well. Some students try to persuade staff to recognise good, rather than exceptional, behaviour and staff mostly resist lowering the threshold for rewards. Disruption to learning because of misbehaviour is rare and any student who expresses frustration or agitation is well managed by staff.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say bullying is rare and staff and parents agree. Students say if they, or anyone else, was being bullied, they would be confident to turn to a member of staff for help. However, students say staff would notice it and 'would be on it like a bulldog!'
- Students have opportunities to talk about and understand how social networking sites and mobile phones can be misused and the personal development sessions make sure students understand how to keep themselves healthy and safe.
- Attendance has improved since 2012 and is now closer to the national average. Fewer students are persistently absent and many students have had no absence since the beginning of term. The number of students excluded from school for a fixed period of time has reduced markedly in the same period.
- The attendance of students following courses away from the school site is good, including for the very few students who make their own way to the setting.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The majority of teaching is consistently good and, as a result, following a period of settling in, students make rapid progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The school's records of progress show this pattern over the two terms for most students.
- Many students arrive at the school with limited literacy skills and they quickly improve as a result of the one-to-one reading and spelling support sessions. For example, one student who could not write or read when he arrived at the school has steadily acquired these skills, which were evident in his exercise book.
- Progress in developing mathematical skills across different subjects is beginning to develop because subject leaders are now identifying opportunities to teach the same mathematical skill in the same way across subjects, such as graphs in both mathematics and science lessons.
- Good teaching and encouragement to write using correct sentence structure is effective in developing skills to write in simple sentences. When longer pieces of writing are undertaken by students, some staff give too much help so students do not develop their own ability to illustrate their ideas, or explain their thinking and understanding when they write answers in tests or examinations. As a result, their ability to reach higher standards is limited.
- When writing skills are taught well, students are more able to reach higher standards. In a Key Stage 4 English lesson, students were able to talk about the language, ideas, feelings and relationships in the text they were studying but were limited in writing about it, until the teacher skilfully captured, in simple visual terms, a framework the students could use to structure their writing.
- Regular homework is set and students said teachers expected it to be returned on time.
- The majority of teachers explain their teaching using ideas and tasks that engage students' interest. They match the level of explanation closely to students' stages in understanding. In a mathematics lesson, for example, students made rapid progress in understanding terms relating to probability, how probability could be measured, how levels of probability could be arranged on a scale and how to estimate and calculate probability as a result of simple but engaging examples explained in successive steps. Any questions or misunderstandings were responded to in terms that were neither too complex nor too simple.
- All teachers mark students' work regularly but not all suggest what students can do to practise something in a lesson they have not yet fully understood. As a result, students in some subjects still rely on teachers and teaching assistants to explain and re-explain work to them, and do not acquire the secure understanding needed to tackle work with confidence.
- Teaching in the resource base engages students well. Effective teaching assistant support helps students to complete work so they develop confidence in their abilities. Teaching to strengthen their reading skills is good. However, students with the lowest ability do not always understand what they have to do in lessons because the task is not always presented using suitable materials or resources.
- Students who arrive at times other than in Year 7 settle because teachers quickly assess the stages they are at in their learning and plan teaching so it is not too hard or too easy for them.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students arrive at the school working at standards well below those of most students nationally. Students reached higher standards in 2014 than in the past and most gained useful qualifications which prepared them well for the future. Some individual students who were talented or more able achieved very high standards.
- Assessments over the last two terms, checked and moderated with external subject specialists, indicate students are accelerating their progress as a result of better teaching. Comparisons of written work from the spring term with written work completed in the autumn term, show younger students progressing from worksheets requiring single word answers or word completion exercises, to work requiring answers in sentences in a wider range of tasks dealing with more complex ideas. Older students are introduced to new and more sophisticated vocabulary which they are expected to use in their writing. Mathematics books over the last two terms contain work on algebra, precise construction of mathematical shapes and investigation of the properties of shapes, completed with consistent accuracy and consistently good presentation.
- Current Year 10 and 11 students are very clear about the targets set for them to reach by the end of Year 11 and the majority are expected to achieve a Grade D or C in English and mathematics.
- All students spoken to said they had improved their work since they had arrived at the school, with some acquiring essential literacy skills for the first time.
- Most students are eligible for support provided by pupil premium funding and they are helped to manage their behaviour and improve their attendance by additional staff paid for by the additional funding. If they fall behind in their work, there is a wide range of subject support so they can catch up, and most do. They make similar progress to the few students not eligible for this additional funding.
- More able students are increasingly well supported in achieving high standards, and additional teaching by subject specialists enables them to work towards high and challenging targets.
- Students attending the resource base thrive in the area because the rooms are carefully planned to guide different activities. They settle quickly and most achieve increasingly well because there is a clear expectation that they will behave and learn well and will help their peers to do so if they are struggling.
- Students who follow courses away from the school site achieve well as a result of the good support given by school staff at college. Students spoken to about their progress describe clearly what they have learned and how it will help them when they leave school.

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	452001

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community Special School
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Widdowson
Headteacher	Michael Frost
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2013
Telephone number	01925 263895
Fax number	01925 860487
Email address	grappenhallallschool_head@warrington.gov.uk

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