

The Grove School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123580
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	380694
Inspection dates	04–05 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Gwendoline Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1011
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Ingham
Headteacher	Jane Radbourne
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Parts of 42 lessons were observed and a similar number of teachers were seen. Meetings were held with parents, groups of students and individual students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body and the headteacher's report to the governing body. Completed questionnaires from 136 parents and carers were received.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent are the school's strategies for raising attainment, particularly among middle attaining students, and in English, having the expected impact on standards?
- Is the quality of teaching having a sufficient impact on promoting good learning and good progress for all students and thus on improving their attainment?
- How effective is the integration of pastoral and academic monitoring systems in ensuring that individual students maximise their progress?
- To what extent do middle leaders ensure that teaching and learning in their subjects enable students to maximise their progress and raise their attainment?
- Is the monitoring of progress of sixth form students sufficiently rigorous and frequent to ensure they achieve as well as they are able?

Information about the school

The Grove School is of average size. It is the only secondary school in the town and attracts students from there and surrounding rural areas. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most students are White British and there are very few students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion of students with a statement of educational needs is above average. Seven looked after children are on the school roll. The school has specialist language college status.

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

2

Main findings

Grove School has seen some significant improvement in its provision over recent years, such that teaching and assessment, curriculum and care, guidance and support are all now good. This is the result of a concerted and well-focused approach by the head teacher and senior leadership team to raise expectations and aspirations among staff and students about what they can achieve. This good provision is contributing to the overall good progress students are now making in lessons. However, the good progress observed in lessons has not yet had a sufficient impact on published value-added data, which indicates satisfactory progress over recent years and attainment at the end of Year 11 that is still only broadly average. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

While teaching and assessment are now good, a few aspects still limit the amount of progress students make in some lessons. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that all students' understanding is secure before they move on to the next steps in their learning; however, this is not always the case. Marking is not always used purposefully to promote good progress in learning. Questioning is not always used sufficiently effectively to extend and deepen students' understanding, or to ensure that all students are thoroughly engaged and expected to contribute in lessons. The school has made sensible decisions about its curriculum and language specialism at a time of budget restrictions. By maintaining its language work with primary schools and developing a more international focus in school, it is enhancing its community links. By cutting back on the compulsory curriculum time devoted to languages and refocusing this on provision matched more closely to students' needs it is providing greater opportunities for all students to achieve well.

School leaders have an accurate picture and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Thorough self-evaluation at senior and middle leader levels enables the school to identify priorities for improvement and to implement strategies to bring this about. Realistic but challenging targets are set. The school's capacity to improve is good, as is evident by the way in which previously identified weaknesses in teaching and in the curriculum have been tackled, so that performance in each of these areas has crossed a grade boundary since the last inspection. Systems are constantly reviewed to ensure that they are robust and effective and, as a result, all aspects of the school run smoothly.

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

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inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve overall achievement by ensuring that students at each key stage make at least good progress in their learning and that the positive rate at which attainment at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form has been increasing, is accelerated. Do this by:
 - ensuring that in all lessons teachers establish that students' understanding is secure before moving on to the next stage in their learning
 - using marking more effectively and consistently in all subjects so that all students receive clear diagnostic guidance on how to move to the next level, they take an active role in making effective use of this guidance and that teachers monitor the impact on progress
 - developing teachers' use of questioning as an effective tool to extend and deepen students' thinking and understanding by ensuring there is an expectation that all students, regardless of ability, are fully engaged and contributing in lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Although attainment is broadly average there has been a continual trend of improvement. Thus in 2008, 37% of Year 11 students gained five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grades C or above and this increased year-on-year to reach 52% in 2011. Other attainment measures are above average for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for the small number of students who speak English as an additional language. Progress is satisfactory overall and in English because, over recent years, students have made the progress expected of them given their starting points. However, progress in mathematics has been good. Some individual groups of students, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and looked after children, have been making good progress over recent years. The progress students made in the vast majority of lessons observed during the inspection was good and occasionally outstanding. Lesson observations show students are keen to do well and to produce their best work. In most lessons, they show good levels of motivation and are interested and enthusiastic about learning.

Evidence about other outcomes includes the following.

- Different groups of students all report that they feel safe at school and note that both racism and bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and made a strong contribution to good learning in most lessons observed during the inspection.
- Students understand the main threats to their health and how they can be avoided and some, but not all, take action to improve their health, for example by selecting healthy eating options and by taking advantage of the wide range of physical activity and sporting opportunities offered.

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- Students care about issues facing their local area, recently contributing ideas to the local town plan. They actively support a range of charities and are involved in mentoring activities in local primary schools.
- Students develop good employability skills, are prepared well for their future and have a good understanding of the options available to them. The number of 16 year old students who do not continue their education, or enter employment or training, is well below average.
- Students engage well with peers from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, respect each other and their teachers. This positive picture in relation to non-academic outcomes is reflected in the comment from one parent: 'The school has some real strengths particularly in the effort it takes to be inclusive and welcoming to the whole range of pupils, the emphasis on good social relationships and a very proactive attitude to bullying.'

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	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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

How effective is the provision?

In the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was good and secured good progress and learning. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. The well-focused attention to learning of adults other than teachers promotes the progress and learning of clearly targeted students. Good use of resources helps to engage students. Where teaching is very good, teachers constantly stretch and challenge students to think hard. As one Year 11 student said, 'Teachers get us to apply what we learn to new situations.' Assessment procedures are good in a large majority of lessons. However, there is not yet a consistent,

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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school-wide approach to questioning so that in some lessons students call out and, in others, not all students expect or are required to respond to questions. The quality of marking in identifying how to reach the next level is not a consistently good feature and its impact on promoting progress is not always evident. Oral feedback is often good and, in some cases, a strength as teachers effectively reshape learning activities in the light of students' good progress. However, in weaker lessons, teachers move on without establishing that all students are secure in their understanding. Targets are generally known by students who often, but not always, know what next steps to take in order to make even further progress.

This school provides a well-organised and wide-ranging curriculum, including a strong mix of academic and vocational courses that have been particularly well adapted to meet the needs and interests of its students. The curriculum contributes well towards the development of students' wider personal, social and employability skills, which are also promoted by a good spread of cross-curricular links and enrichment activities. Valuable contributions from a wide range of business, college and other partnerships enhance this further. The school's specialist language college status makes a positive contribution to provision, particularly in its focus on international themes.

A well-organised structure to support students contributes to their good development and well-being. Transition arrangements between each key stage are smooth and well thought-out. As one parent noted: 'The transition arrangements were excellent and my child settled quickly thanks to the teachers and her tutor.' Good quality information, advice and guidance for students in Year 9 and Year 11 enable them to make confident, well-informed choices about the most appropriate courses to meet their individual needs. The care and support of potentially vulnerable students is particularly effective, and there are striking examples of students who have benefited from this and are achieving well. One parent noted: 'My son has had tremendous support. The school has been very accommodating with his particular difficulties and he has been totally integrated into mainstream education which has been a wonderful boost to his confidence.' Improved attendance and a significant fall in the number of persistent non-attenders are the result of effective strategies introduced by the school. Partnerships with external agencies and other organisations contribute significantly to the good care, guidance and support offered to students.

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?

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Strong leadership from the headteacher is promoting a culture of improvement and of high expectations among staff and students, and a clear focus on raising the achievement of all students. Middle leaders, well supported by senior leaders, are accountable for and drive improvement in their specialist areas. Effective use of data informs next steps for improving provision and ensuring that it meets students' needs. Rigorous monitoring and well-planned and implemented interventions help an increasing number of students to gain success, whether in terms of academic or vocational achievement. As a result of good leadership and management, there is substantial evidence that achievement is improving strongly, for example in terms of the continual upward trend of improvement in attainment and the good progress seen in lessons.

The governing body is rigorous in discharging its statutory duties including ensuring students and staff are safe. Its members are very well informed about the school and fully involved in evaluating its performance. The school adopts recommended good practice in relation to all aspects of safeguarding and the provision for child protection is particularly strong. Relationships with parents and carers are very positive, and the school regularly seeks their views and acts on their suggestions. The parents of potentially vulnerable children are particularly positive, and work closely with the school and external partners. As one parent noted, 'Whenever we have needed to address an issue at school regarding our son, the staff have been brilliant - immediate response, action and follow-up.'

Concerted action to promote equality of opportunity for all students has resulted in a significant improvement in the performance of groups of students, for example that of potentially vulnerable students, including looked after children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and in narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' achievement. The school promotes engagement with a wide range of groups and partners in the local area and beyond, including working with schools overseas. Its increasing focus on an international dimension enhances the curriculum and has a positive impact on student outcomes.

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

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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

Sixth form

Overall, students' achievement is good. This was confirmed by the good progress observed in lesson observations. Very few students who join the sixth form leave before completing their courses. Equally almost all students continue on to further or higher education, training or employment after the sixth form. Students willingly and enthusiastically take on responsibilities and contribute to the school and local community, for example organising charitable activities and taking part in Young Enterprise competitions. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with strengths and weaknesses similar to those noted in the section on provision in the main school. The curriculum provides a broad range of subjects and courses that are matched well to students' needs. There are good induction procedures to ensure that transition from Year 11 to 12 is smooth. Good information, advice and guidance is provided so that students are fully informed about their future options, whether these be in further or higher education or in employment and training. Sixth form tutors and teachers are very supportive and know students extremely well. Based upon thorough and detailed analysis, leaders have taken decisive actions to improve provision and achievement in the sixth form. This has involved continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a greater proportion is now judged to be good or better, revising entry criteria to ensure students are matched suitably to the courses they study and thus more likely to achieve well. There is rigorous monitoring of progress and more immediate and targeted intervention by guidance leaders.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

Around 14% of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Those who did respond, have a positive view of the school. Almost all said that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe. A small minority felt that the school did not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors' judged this aspect to be satisfactory and noted that, although students were well informed about how to live a healthy lifestyle, a small number were not making an active choice to do so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Grove 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 136 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1011 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	39	78	57	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	36	83	61	2	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	39	74	54	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	32	76	56	9	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	27	89	65	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	26	67	49	22	16	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	20	76	56	26	19	2	1
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)	40	29	81	60	6	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	30	81	60	8	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	24	79	58	11	8	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	22	88	65	7	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	42	31	85	63	5	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	32	87	64	5	4	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



6 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Grove School, Market Drayton TF9 1HF

Inspectors enjoyed their visit to your school and would like to thank those of you who gave up time to talk to us.

We judged your school to be satisfactory overall. The headteacher and her leadership team, your heads of departments, and all your teachers and support staff have been very focused on ensuring that the provision at Grove School improves and that you all benefit from this. We can see the results of their efforts in the improvements to the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the care and support you receive, all of which are now good. It can also be seen in the improving results that students in Year 11 and in the sixth form are getting in their examinations. From our lesson observations, we judged that the progress you are making in learning is now good. But this needs to translate into good progress throughout the year and in your eventual examination results. We have therefore asked the headteacher to ensure that:

- in all your lessons, teachers establish that your understanding is solid before moving on to the next stage of your learning
- marking provides you with clear guidance on how to move to the next level, that you read the guidance and act upon it, and that teachers monitor its impact on your progress
- teachers use questioning to extend and deepen your thinking and understanding
- you all listen carefully and are prepared to contribute.

You can help the school to help you to achieve well by: attending regularly; behaving well at all times and remembering that when you misbehave you affect someone else's chance of learning effectively; and by making more of an effort to lead a healthy lifestyle by, for example, selecting healthy eating options at lunchtimes.

Yours sincerely

Gwendoline Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector

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