

Grange Academy

Halsey Road, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 8AU

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders have not given enough focus to monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and achievement during a time of significant change for the academy.
- Not enough teaching is good because teachers have not been given the necessary guidance or challenge to improve their work.
- In some classes, teachers do not provide enough challenge for the pupils who are capable of making faster progress.
- In some subjects, learning activities prepared by teachers do not demonstrate high standards of presentation for pupils to emulate. As a result, the quality of their work varies.
- Students are not expected to develop and use their mathematics and writing skills well enough in other subjects.
- Governors are not well enough informed about the achievement of different groups of pupils or the quality of teaching to enable them to hold leaders sufficiently to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is a strength. Rigorous processes, sensitive support and clear rules and sanctions mean students behave well in lessons and around school.
- In the primary classes, pupils' work and learning support is well planned; as a result they make good progress.
- Students make good and sometimes better progress in developing their reading skills.
- All Year 11 pupils routinely secure a place in further education.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because of the strong values taught and the respect for students that are promoted by staff and governors.
- Pupils and students say that they feel safe and well looked after at school. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and pupils' emotional needs are carefully considered.
- The headteacher has put processes in place to address the areas requiring improvement. It is too soon to see the impact of these.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of subjects in 18 lessons in primary and secondary classes. Some of these were joint observations with the headteacher. During these observations, they looked at work and spoke to pupils and students about their learning.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the head of primary, the head of secondary, with the safeguarding lead, staff, a group of primary pupils and a group of Year 10 students.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation including safeguarding policies, school improvement planning, the school’s self-evaluation, achievement targets and minutes of governing body meetings. They scrutinised a wide range of pupils’ work.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be taken into account. An inspector met with a group of primary parents and took account of other correspondence received.
- During this inspection, the Year 11 students were out of school on work experience.

Inspection team

Prue Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Helen Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Grange Academy provides education for pupils currently aged between 7 and 16 with a wide range of special educational needs. The majority have moderate learning difficulties and a small number have specific, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. About a quarter of pupils have autistic spectrum difficulties.
- Since the last inspection, the predecessor school has converted to become Grange Academy with its own board of trustees and governors in March 2013.
- An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and a very small number are looked after by the local authority. The academy receives pupil premium funding (additional funding for those at risk of underachievement) for these pupils.
- The academy runs its own breakfast club.
- Following the retirement of the deputy headteacher in July 2014, the leadership team has been restructured so the headteacher, head of primary and head of secondary provision have all taken on extra responsibilities.
- Pupils currently attend from Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring learning tasks accurately meet the needs of all students in lessons, particularly those who are able to make faster progress
 - ensuring learning activities planned by teachers demonstrate high expectations of the way students present their work
 - supporting students to use their writing and mathematics skills in different subjects to the best of their ability.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - setting clear expectations for the achievement of different groups of pupils and for the quality of teaching in improvement planning so that leaders and governors can monitor whether these are being achieved regularly
 - sharpening the focus of leaders on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching so that all teachers are given regular guidance on their strengths and on the aspects of their work they need to improve
 - ensuring leaders set targets for achievement that accurately reflect pupils' starting points and that these are reviewed with teachers at regular points throughout the year and adjusted as appropriate.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because changes in staffing and the conversion to academy status have diverted leaders' attention from monitoring the quality of teaching and the regular review of pupils' achievement. As a result, strengths in teaching have not been recognised and guidance for teachers needing to improve their practice has been lacking.
- Changes have recently been made to the way leadership is structured. As a result, although the oversight of the primary team is robust, there is not the same capacity to monitor and develop the work of the secondary team well. There is not enough information to demonstrate that the full range of evidence, including analysis of pupils' work, is taken into account when judging the quality of teaching. The quality of subject leadership is variable because monitoring is not undertaken routinely. The new English leader has however, rapidly identified strengths in English as well as aspects that need to be improved.
- New systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress have been implemented. While these have the potential to improve how assessment information is used to meet pupils' learning needs and analyse the effectiveness of the school's work, it is too early to see their impact. Annual targets set by leaders do not pay sufficient attention to pupils' starting points or include enough detail about the performance of different groups; for example, those who receive extra support through the pupil premium.
- The headteacher and Chair of Governors are passionate about ensuring Grange Academy supports pupils to overcome the difficulties they face and to realise they can be successful. This passion is reflected in the dedication and commitment of the staff team who, despite not having clear enough objectives to develop their practice, are tireless in working to support the pupils to achieve well and to enjoy their time at the academy. In this way they promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The management of behaviour is well led. Expectations are clear, good records are kept and clear guidance is given to staff on managing challenging behaviour.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely well addressed; it is a strength of the academy's work. Pupils discuss how well they are encouraged to consider the feelings of others and there is good evidence to show the impact of this in the way they treat each other and in their work with staff. Leaders tackle any incidents of discrimination sensitively and develop pupils' understanding of right and wrong, encouraging them carefully to appreciate the impact of their actions. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Staff have worked effectively to adapt the curriculum to meet new requirements. The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers pupils a wide range of learning opportunities in their lessons and through the very strong variety of enrichment activities. These include horse riding, rowing and working to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh award. Pupils were observed having great fun in a cheerleading session during the inspection.
- The headteacher has refined systems of managing staff performance so that judgements about their work are linked to pupils' achievements. Because this process is not embedded, it is too early to identify its impact.
- There is some review of how effectively the pupil premium funding is used to enhance the achievement of eligible pupils. This is not sufficiently detailed in relation to the impact of extra support and provision on pupils' achievement to allow decisions about whether this is wholly successful to be made.
- The extra primary physical education and sport premium funding has been used to enhance opportunities for pupil to participate in a range of extra activities in school and through visits to external providers for example Grafham Water Outdoor Centre. Through its use, pupils are encouraged to experience new activities and to learn to participate as part of a team and games have been enhanced at playtime.

- Partnerships with external agencies are strong and the academy has made good progress in implementing the new Education Health and Care plans. The Borough Council has been instrumental in supporting this development and the academy makes very good use of the aligned work of partner agencies to ensure pupils receive appropriate support.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- Parents are very pleased with the difference the academy makes to their children's self-esteem, to their engagement in learning and their behaviour. As a result they say they look forward to annual reviews and to the positive celebration of their children's achievements which is very different to more negative experiences in the past.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is not yet fully effective. The Chair of Governors has determinedly developed a board with very strong expertise that is poised to support and drive the quality and extent of education provided at Grange Academy. She has unremittingly led a vision for supporting pupils to achieve their best, extending the age range served by the academy and increasing the range of provision. Parents have been consulted and are almost unanimous in their support for the proposed changes.
 - The governing body meets its statutory duties and has ensured safeguarding policies are appropriate. They have not however, received sufficiently detailed analysis about the quality of teaching, or about the achievement of different groups of pupils, to enable them to sufficiently hold leaders to account, or to celebrate the school's successes. They are not fully aware how the school rewards good teaching or tackles underperformance.
 - Governors know that the headteacher has implemented more rigorous arrangements for the management of teachers' performance; it is too early yet for them to evaluate the impact of this work.
 - Governors have a secure understanding of the academy's finances evidenced in two audits. They strive to secure best value in the use of the academy's resources.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because effective procedures, strategies and plans ensure pupils are supported to understand the impact of their actions. Staff are very careful and sensitive in managing potentially challenging behaviour and pre-empting situations so that they do not escalate.
- Pupils say they feel well supported to manage their behaviour. In the great majority of lessons, because relationships are strong, they behave well and engage confidently with each other, their teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils are supported to respond to requirements effectively through the use of appropriate strategies for example signing, symbols or gentle encouragement.
- Pupils develop a strong sense of self-confidence and self-esteem. This was evident in the discussions different groups of pupils had with inspectors during which they maintained eye contact, were courteous and polite and represented their academy with pride. Pupils contribute well to discussion in lessons and show respect for each other and staff in the academy.
- There is good evidence that pupils enjoy the range of activities they are offered. In rehearsals for the primary school play, pupils sang and acted with joy and enthusiasm. Similarly in a secondary drama lesson, pupils supported each other sensitively to create short play sequences.
- Where teaching is good, pupils are challenged and supported in their learning and engage well. Where it is less so, pupils can become disinterested, the standard of their behaviour falls and learning can be disrupted.
- Attendance is above that of similar schools. It is monitored well and where there are patterns of persistent absence, action is taken. There are good relationships with wider services to support families in ensuring their children are at school.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding policies are in place, identity checks are rigorous and references followed up in detail. Records show that staff training is regular and extensive. For example, staff have been trained in the professional standards expected of them and to identify potential indicators of exploitation in the most vulnerable pupils. New staff are provided with induction packs which ensure they are clear about procedures and expectations.
- Supervision levels are carefully thought through so that pupils can play and spend time together independently. Because these levels are high, pupils also chat and share how they are feeling with staff. This makes the start to the school day and break times calm and well ordered; pupils say they enjoy these opportunities to spend time together.
- In discussion in formal groups and more informally, pupils said they feel safe at the academy and that the academy looks after their interests. Some of the younger pupils say they feel valued and their abilities are celebrated. Pupils say that there are incidences of poor behaviour and of unkindness but that the academy's management of behaviour works and staff will deal with things if they become difficult. They understand the different forms of bullying, know what to do in emergencies at the academy and know not to share personal details on the internet.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality varies across subjects. In some lessons, directions and demonstrations of expected learning are not clear and pupils do not understand what they need to do well enough to make good progress. In many lessons, lower attaining pupils are supported well to make good progress but the more able pupils are not helped to build on what they know quickly enough so do not reach their potential.
- Because practice varies across subjects and leadership has been in flux, expectations of how students use their writing and mathematics skills are inconsistent and so are not as effectively developed as they could be. Also, in some lessons, worksheets and learning tasks do not communicate high enough standards and pupils' work reflects this lack of value.
- Where teaching is good, work is carefully planned, both to develop pupils' skills and to engage them in thinking through their tasks carefully. In these lessons, pupils work hard and as a result, achieve well and reach high standards. In the best lessons, there is a spirituality created by the intense engagement teachers elicit from pupils. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, the level of analysis of the class text and excellent questioning of the teacher enabled pupils to explain the use of military language with confidence and empathise with the experience of homeless people in their work. This was further supplemented by high quality classroom displays in which pictures and questions were used to develop pupils' ideas and understanding.
- Teaching is good in the primary classes. Teachers know pupils and their learning needs well and targets for improvement are relevant and reviewed frequently. Work is matched to the progress pupils make and marking and feedback help to move their learning on. In some instances, pupils make well-reasoned responses to the further challenge they receive in their teacher's marking. These lessons are characterised by lively interactions which make learning fun and support pupils to feel positive about themselves as successful learners.
- Teaching for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions is developing under new leadership. There is a focus on teaching appropriate interactions with others. Adults care deeply about the pupils who are supported to conduct themselves appropriately. In some cases, because of carefully targeted teaching pupils consolidate and extend their learning well. Sometimes however, time is not used effectively and learning time is lost.
- Learning support assistants are led and supported well. As a result, their work is increasingly effective. Where it is highly effective, the partnership between teachers and learning support assistants is very strong. Because both are clear about what pupils are learning and how best to support them, progress

accelerates and behaviour is well managed. Their recording of pupils' work supports teachers to understand how well pupils are learning. In some instances this analysis could be better focused on pupils' progress measured against the learning intentions for a lesson.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment when they start at the academy varies widely, evidence shows that the level of complexity of the pupil's needs is rising. The majority have very low starting points, lack self-esteem and have experience of a number of different schools. This is particularly the case when pupils start school later in the secondary phase. The academy assesses pupils' attainment on entry quickly to establish an understanding of their starting points.
- In the primary classes, pupils make good progress because their work is carefully observed and marked and the next learning activities are based on how well pupils' understanding develops. Teachers plan to meet the wide range of abilities in detail and in most lessons ensure that the more able are challenged to succeed. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their reading and say that adults are 'really good at making us want to learn'. In many areas pupils exceed the annual targets set for them. This is sometimes because their starting points have not been considered by leaders in enough detail for them to be sufficiently challenging.
- In secondary subjects, progress is variable because the quality of teaching varies. Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in reading because the academy insists it is taught effectively and pupils are encouraged to enjoy books. Progress in some subjects, including mathematics and writing, is less strong because pupils, particularly those who are capable of making more rapid progress, are not always well enough supported to do so and teachers do not all share the same high expectations of individual pupils.
- A consequence of the care and respect given to pupils is that their social and personal development is strong. Pupils greet each other and the staff warmly and learn to share their ideas confidently.
- Pupils participate in a wide range of subjects. They acquire a range of skills in art, information technology, design technology, history and food technology. During the inspection, a class of Year 10 pupils made good progress in an art lesson developing and using techniques inspired by Rousseau in their work.
- In Year 11, pupils' work and attainment data show they make better progress. Pupils are offered the opportunity to gain a range of entry level qualifications, unit awards and GCSEs. They are supported well to achieve these because the challenge to improve is sharper and better focused than it is earlier in the secondary phase. As a result they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- During the inspection all the Year 11 pupils were on work experience. Feedback from staff visiting placements was positive and pupils are well prepared for the next phase in their education. In 2014, realising the academy's ambitions, all pupils who left Grange Academy went on to post-16 education.
- Because senior leaders' analysis of achievement does not show how well different groups of pupils perform, it is difficult to ascertain how effectively resources are used to support equal opportunities. Similarly, the performance of the more able pupils or those eligible for the pupil premium, has not been considered separately. Published data show that pupils eligible for the pupil premium reach standards that are similar to or better than other pupils in school by the end of the primary phase. By the end of Year 11, national data show that in 2014 the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils were in line with or slightly below their peers.

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	139374
Local authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	448005

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Countess of Erroll
Headteacher	Iain Davidson
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 March 2012
Telephone number	01234 407100
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