

Grange Academy

Halsey Road, Kempston, Bedford MK42 8AU

Inspection dates

5–6 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has been highly effective in his drive and determination to transform the school to achieve good outcomes since his appointment 18 months ago.
- The headteacher benefits from excellent support from the deputy head and senior leaders. With good support from the governing body, they have rapidly improved teaching, learning, pupils' personal development, the curriculum and pupils' outcomes. They are clearly demonstrating capacity to improve further.
- Subject leaders are not checking that pupils are responding to the good advice they receive when their books are marked, in line with the school's policy.
- Teachers usually use their good subject knowledge well and set high expectations for learning to ensure that pupils build on their prior learning. As a result, they make good progress.
- Teaching assistants and teachers manage behaviour and pupils' learning effectively together.
- Occasionally teachers are not using the information about pupils' prior learning to match tasks to their different abilities.
- Pupils with autism benefit from excellent support from teaching assistants so they make rapid progress in communication and social interaction skills.
- Pupils across the school make good progress from their different starting points, especially in English and mathematics. The youngest make good progress in reading and the oldest make good progress towards their examinations in most subjects?
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Their attendance has significantly improved and they have good attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe and are happy at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to outstanding, to enable pupils to make outstanding progress over time, by making sure that:
 - teachers consistently use the information about pupils' prior learning to match tasks to their different needs
 - subject leaders check that pupils always respond to the good advice teachers provide in their written feedback in pupils' books, consistent with the school's marking policy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is providing transformational leadership in turning the school round from one which was clearly coasting and requiring improvement to one providing a good education. The headteacher successfully recruited experienced teachers to replace those who had left, and strengthened the leadership team. Together with good support from the governing body, the deputy headteacher and senior leaders are providing excellent support in driving improvement forwards.
- Subject leaders are also providing strong support for school improvement. As a result, pupils' achievements in all subjects, but especially in English and mathematics, are good because of good teaching. The school's marking policy is implemented but subject leaders are not checking that pupils always respond to the good written guidance they are given by teachers to improve their work when their books are marked.
- The school's view of itself is accurate and convincing. Leaders use the outcomes very effectively to establish clear priorities for improvements firmly linked to moving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding.
- Leadership of teaching is highly effective in eliminating weaknesses and rapidly improving teaching, learning and assessment. The headteacher has introduced very effective systems for managing the performance of teachers and teaching assistants through regular visits to lessons, examination of pupils' books and reviews of pupils' progress each term. These outcomes are used in discussion with staff to agree targets for improving practice and raising achievement. Any weaknesses identified are resolved through mentoring and training until teaching improves. The school also ensures that good teaching is rewarded through increases in salary, and it has a zero tolerance for mediocrity. Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, support this culture for improving teaching. They too look at pupils' work, review pupils' progress and visit lessons in their subjects to determine the impact of teaching on learning over time and to identify areas for development within their subjects. This has led to a term-by-term improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes across the school.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and highly relevant to pupils' needs, with a strong emphasis on developing the skills of communication, literacy and numeracy. Younger pupils have good opportunities to learn a broad range of subjects within topic themes which change each term. Older pupils have increased opportunities since the previous inspection to study for a wide range of examination courses, including GCSEs.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum enriches pupils' learning through a range of well-planned visits, bringing visitors into the school and providing a wide variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs to promote enjoyment and personal development. There are good levels of participation in sports clubs, a science club, a computing club and an art club. Leaders have established strong links with local schools to enrich learning in food technology, art and computing.
- The curriculum is promoting pupils' personal development, including fundamental British values, well, especially through the UNICEF Rights of the Child charter, to which

the school adheres. Pupils' understanding of diversity is promoted through studying African and Chinese art. Democracy and the rule of law are promoted through the school parliament, whose members recently visited the Houses of Parliament, and through participation in the police squad. School assemblies provide pupils with time for reflection and promote moral development well. Pupils' social development is particularly enhanced through opportunities to work together in lessons, to take turns to share and to take responsibility in the school.

- Leaders have developed an effective system of assessment for use in planning lessons and tracking progress. This includes a personal passport for each pupil outlining key strengths, key learning needs and strategies to move learning forward. This is used alongside progress measured in steps against descriptors, standardised tests and statements of progress against challenging learning objectives. Staff combine these elements to make judgements about whether progress is less than expected, as expected or better than expected. The accuracy of these judgements is checked by leaders in the school and externally in discussions with other schools.
- The school makes good use of its additional funding to support the learning and well-being of different pupils. The pupil premium, including enhanced pupil premium funding, is used effectively to provide intervention groups for disadvantaged pupils and pupils looked after to enable them to catch up quickly with their peers. Year 7 catch-up funding is used to provide individual support in literacy and numeracy. Primary sport funding is used for specialist coaching, renewal of physical education equipment and the purchase of new playground equipment. As a result, pupils' participation in sport has increased, they exercise during breaktimes and their participation in after-school sports clubs has increased.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well by making sure that all pupils have full access to the curriculum and that pupils with different learning needs make equally good progress. Leaders tackle any form of discrimination well, as seen in the rapid decline in the number of recorded incidents of racism or harassment of any kind.
- The local authority school improvement adviser is providing good support for the school by forging links with a multi-academy trust and providing training in phonics.
- The executive principal of Bedford Inclusive Learning and Training Trust (BILTT) is providing good support through regular visits to monitor and support the work of the school.

Governance

- Governors are providing good oversight of the school's work and challenging leaders effectively to support improvement since the external review of governance. They visit the school regularly to look at aspects of the school's work and they ask leaders challenging questions when they submit reports to the governing body.
- They have a realistic view of teaching and a working knowledge of data. They use the information about the progress of different groups of pupils well to hold leaders to account for the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium.

- Governors are ensuring that the performance management arrangements for the headteacher are rigorous, based securely on development plan priorities and linked to the school's system of appraising staff.
- They are ensuring that the legal requirements for safeguarding are met, through regular visits to check the implementation of the relevant policies and procedures.
- Governors are ensuring that the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including fundamental British values, effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All training in child protection and safeguarding is up to date and the school's thorough procedures for checking the suitability of staff are implemented well. Staff recognise that training in safeguarding has effectively enhanced their skills. Parents, staff and pupils believe that pupils are safe. Pupils know whom to go to if they are worried or concerned.
- Staff take swift action to safeguard pupils when any concerns are raised and the school works effectively with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding to ensure that all pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The outcomes of visits to lessons over time, scrutiny of pupils' books and the school's records of progress over time clearly demonstrate that teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teaching has improved significantly since the appointment of the headteacher and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and the progress they are making.
- Teachers provide a strong ethos for learning in the classrooms, with the most recent examples of pupils' work clearly displayed and celebrated and working walls which are used well throughout lessons to clarify any misunderstandings. Teachers maintain strong relationships with pupils, encouraging them to try harder and praising them for their efforts. They manage pupils' behaviour well and, as a result, pupils focus on their learning.
- Teachers are using their good subject knowledge to ensure that pupils acquire new knowledge and skills quickly. This was seen in mathematics lessons where teaching has improved significantly because teachers are using every opportunity to deepen pupils' reasoning skills and providing practical learning activities for them to apply their skills. This increases pupils' motivation and prepares them well for life beyond school.
- Staff use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' thinking, as seen in many lessons and in pupils' work. However, pupils do not always respond to the questions teachers raise or the pointers for improving their work when their books are marked.
- In lesson visits over time and in lessons seen during the inspection, teaching assistants worked consistently well with teachers to manage pupils' learning and behaviour. They provide excellent support for pupils with autism by focusing on the development of language and social skills. As a result, these pupils make rapid progress in social interaction and communication skills. Teaching assistants also provide consistently

good support for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and Year 7 pupils, who need to catch up quickly.

- The teaching of phonics in the primary department is good and pupils use these skills well to read unfamiliar words and to spell accurately in their writing. The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics across the school is good, enabling pupils to apply these skills well across different subjects.
- Teachers generally use assessment well in their planning of lessons. However, on a few occasions, they miss the opportunity to use the information about pupils' prior learning to match learning tasks to the different needs of pupils. Most pupils said, in discussion about their learning, that their work was challenging and pitched at the right level of difficulty. However, a very small number said that their work was either too hard or too easy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils understand the importance of good behaviour to their learning and progress and, as a result, they have positive attitudes to learning. They take a pride in their work, as seen in their neat and tidy books, and they are well motivated. They are proud of their school and in discussion they said the best thing about the school is learning.
- Pupils develop good relationships with others and are polite and courteous to adults. They listen carefully in lessons and follow instructions, showing respect for staff and for the views of others.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They show respect for other cultures and religions and celebrate diversity through art and music. They learn about crime and its consequences, and respect for the law, through participation in the police squad. They reflect on social and spiritual issues in assemblies and make a good contribution in raising funds for various charities.
- All pupils benefit from good pastoral care and mentoring, including close work with families. Consequently, pupils settle into routines quickly, grow in confidence and say they are happy in school. Their parents and staff agree that pupils are happy in school. The oldest pupils receive high-quality careers guidance supported by well-thought-out programmes of work experience to enable them to make informed choices about their future lives. By the time they leave school, pupils are mature and confident individuals who are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Staff engage well with pupils in their activities and provide high levels of supervision so that pupils feel safe. In discussion, all pupils said they feel safe and this was confirmed by parents and staff. Pupils adopt safe practices and use resources such as computers safely. They play safely outside and abide by fair play in team games. They move safely from one area of the school to another, and they have a good understanding of how to use the internet safely and the potential danger and risks of social networking sites.

- Pupils say that incidents of bullying have declined rapidly in the past year because pupils are learning about different types of bullying, the effect this has on others and how to prevent it. They said that staff resolve such incidents when they occur effectively, and most parents agree.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly in the past 18 months with rates of exclusions and incidents of unacceptable behaviour rapidly falling.
- Pupils now behave well in lessons and around the school because all staff have high expectations for good behaviour and use the school's system of rewards and sanctions consistently well. As a result, pupils respond well to the code of conduct and to the consistent management of behaviour by staff.
- Attendance has improved significantly for all groups of pupils and has moved from below to close to the national average. The rates of persistent absence are falling and overall absence rates are slightly higher than average because the school's figures show that a few pupils with medical conditions have spent long periods of time in hospital. Pupils now want to come to school and arrive well prepared for learning because the work with families and the rewards available in the school to promote good attendance are effective.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with low attainment due to the nature of their special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's accurate data, outcomes of lessons, visits over time and the work in pupils' books show that from these low starting points they make good progress across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has considerably improved because of good improvements to teaching and leadership of the subject. At the time of the previous inspection and until recently, pupils were making insufficient progress in mathematics. The new mathematics leader is now using every opportunity to make mathematics relevant to everyday life through practical problem-solving activities. There is a shared focus on developing the language of mathematics and on deepening pupils' mathematical reasoning skills.
- Primary-aged pupils at key stage 2 are making good progress in reading and writing because phonics is taught well. They are encouraged to use phonics to read, write and spell unfamiliar words. Reading records for the youngest pupils in Years 3 and 4 show that pupils read widely and often. Pupils with the lowest prior attainment and the most able readers are making equally good progress in reading from their different starting points.
- Pupils with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities due to autism are making outstanding progress in their communication and social interaction skills. The excellent leadership of this provision from the deputy headteacher has ensured that additional funding has been used exceptionally well to provide extra support from

therapists and for the training and development of staff. As a result, teamwork between teachers and support staff is strong and they implement individual programmes to rapidly develop pupils' skills.

- Secondary-aged pupils at key stage 3 make good progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics and English, because teaching is good and the Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to accelerate their learning in English and mathematics.
- Older pupils at key stage 4 are making good progress towards a wide range of examination courses, including GCSEs. The number of current pupils entered for GCSEs has markedly increased this year from those in 2016.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress because the school makes good use of pupil premium funding in providing intervention groups. As a result, they make accelerated gains in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils are given challenging tasks in English and mathematics to ensure that they make good progress from their higher starting points.
- The few pupils looked after make equally good progress as their classmates because leaders are making good use of the enhanced pupil premium funding to provide additional support to accelerate their learning.
- There are no significant differences in the progress of boys and girls.
- Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in a wide range of activities such as the police squad, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, sporting events and life skills.
- All Year 11 pupils are thoroughly prepared for transferring to the forthcoming sixth form or college when they leave school.

School details

Unique reference number	139374
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10031352

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	Ian Wildman
Headteacher	Barney Geen
Telephone number	01234 407 100
Website	www.grange.beds.sch.uk
Email address	info@grangeacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education (DfE) guidance on what academies should publish.
- Grange Academy provides education for pupils currently aged five to 16 years with an education, health and care plan for a range of special education needs and/or disabilities. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and approximately a quarter of them have autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils are funded from Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and neighbouring authorities.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for just over half the pupils, including enhanced pupil premium funding for the very small number who are looked after.

- Since the last inspection, there have been two changes of headteacher and the school has received four monitoring inspection visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors to determine the progress it has made in addressing the areas for improvement identified at its previous inspection.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2016, after the second monitoring visit and after the school had received an official warning from the Department for Education about its poor performance. Since his appointment, the headteacher has recruited new staff to replace the eight teachers who left, and reorganised the leadership team. The governing body has been reorganised following the review of governance recommended at the time of the previous inspection.
- In February 2017, the school applied to the DfE to open a sixth form in September 2017. In March 2017, a further application was submitted to join BILTT, a multi-academy trust, from September 2017. Both applications were approved by the DfE in April 2017. The school is receiving support from the executive principal of BILTT.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out joint visits to lessons in all classes with senior leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work over time. They also heard a few pupils read.
- Inspectors and senior school leaders looked at the school's information about the progress pupils are making across the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, three members of the governing body, the local authority school improvement partner and the executive principal of BILTT.
- Inspectors met with different pupils to seek their views. They also looked at the 10 questionnaire returns from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 20 completed staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors scrutinised the website and examined a wide range of documentation, including the self-evaluation document and school improvement plan, policies and procedures to promote safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings and records of their visits, external reviews of the school's work, and records of behaviour and attendance figures.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kay Leach

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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