

The Grove School

Newcastle Road, Market Drayton, Shropshire TF9 1HF

Inspection dates

7–8 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In recent years, the overall achievement of students in Year 11 and in the sixth form has been at or below that which could reasonably be expected. Not all students have achieved as well as they could have done.
- Students' progress remains uneven. It is not yet strong and consistent across a wide enough range of subjects, including mathematics and science.
- A few subject leaders do not maintain high enough expectations for the planning and teaching of lessons.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Sometimes the work set is not planned carefully enough to provide a good level of challenge for all the students in the class. Occasionally it is not securely based on students' prior knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' marking does not always help students to improve their work. In particular, students are often not given sufficient opportunity to reflect on their work and address the teacher's comments.
- In most subjects, leaders do not ensure that the standards attained by students are checked against those in other schools.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has established a clear direction for the school. She has set high expectations which have refocused and energised the vast majority of staff and students. As a result, teaching is improving and achievement is rising in the school overall, and sharply in several areas, including modern foreign languages.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes are good because courses are well designed to help students achieve their aims. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good.
- Leaders have reorganised the support for disabled students and those with special educational needs. As a result, these students now make good progress.
- Students' attitudes to learning are overwhelmingly positive. They behave well in lessons and during social times. Students rightly feel very safe in school.
- Governors are making sure that the school serves this particular community effectively. They are well informed, shrewd and provide a rigorous challenge to school leaders.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics, science and geography, by:
 - ensuring that all students are set work which consistently provides a sufficient level of challenge
 - making sure all teachers implement the school's marking policy effectively and encourage students to review their work so that they know how to take the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring that accurate assessment of students' work is used to guide planning, so that all lessons build securely on what students already know and can do.

- Improve leadership and management, particularly at subject level, by:
 - ensuring that all subject leaders clearly maintain the highest expectations of their colleagues so that all students benefit from teaching and assessment that is good or better
 - enabling subject leaders to check their judgements about students' work against those of other schools
 - implementing fully the school's plans to use the best teachers' skills to develop rapidly the effectiveness of their colleagues.

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has set a clear direction for improvement and significantly increased expectations for what both staff and students can achieve. She has ensured that the academic targets set for individual students are challenging and encourage the most able to fulfil their academic potential. Information about students' progress is analysed rigorously so that students at risk of falling behind can be targeted. The result is a school culture which is improving teaching and raising students' achievements. The capacity for further improvement is good.
- Leaders effectively hold staff to account. They have reviewed arrangements to evaluate teachers' performance, and now only those who secure good progress for their students receive pay rises. Several teachers have left the school since the last inspection. The school has not found it easy to recruit high-quality staff, but has recently made some strong appointments.
- Leaders have recently provided intensive training to improve the quality of teaching. Staff, including those teachers at any early stage in their careers, say that this is proving very helpful in improving their skills. Several highly effective teachers have begun to provide further training for their colleagues, but this project is at an early stage of implementation.
- Leaders' evaluations of strengths and weaknesses in teaching accorded with those of the inspectors. Evaluation of the school's performance is detailed and objective, and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Development plans are comprehensive, thorough and pinpoint the necessary resources, but do not contain short-term milestones against which to check more quickly on progress.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, and includes a good range of subjects at Key Stage 4. A wide range of opportunities are available after school including additional study and the opportunity to participate in sport, creative or recreational activity. Leaders have evaluated the curriculum thoughtfully, and made important changes. The result is that there are now appropriate courses in the sixth form for all students. There are good arrangements for the teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through taught lessons, especially in religious education and other humanities subjects. Assemblies and tutor time allow for a focus on particular issues, and during the last academic year a week of such activities was devoted to the exploration of British values. This year, key topics will be tackled through whole-school 'discovery days', for which the timetable will be suspended. The school has appointed student ambassadors to ensure that their views contribute fully to the leadership of the school, and to demonstrate the importance of participation and democratic debate.
- The school has spent the pupil premium effectively by providing additional teaching and on strategies that are designed to keep disadvantaged students fully engaged with their learning. The school evaluates the impact of these strategies as part of its regular evaluation of students' progress, and redirects them accordingly. This support alongside improvements in the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs mean that the school effectively promotes equality of opportunity.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. Staff keep careful records, work well with parents and react quickly to involve other agencies to help students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Staff are well trained to identify any students who may be at risk. Regular site inspections and adherence to a national safety standard keep the large site safe.
- Subject and other leaders entirely share the headteacher's commitment to high standards and greater consistency, and speak warmly of the support they receive. Nevertheless, they have not all succeeded in establishing and maintaining high expectations for the quality of planning, teaching and assessment so that standards in a few departments lag behind others.
- The school has made interim arrangements to assess students' work at Key Stage 3 following the removal of National Curriculum levels, and the school has ensured that these are well understood by staff, students and parents. Subject leaders ensure that judgements made about students' work are consistent, and some but not all have made arrangements to check their accuracy by comparing them with those made by other schools.
- Students receive effective careers guidance and are increasingly encouraged to have high aspirations when choosing their careers. As a result, almost all students, both those leaving the main school and those leaving the sixth form, find appropriate placements in further education and training.

- Staff monitor the progress, behaviour and attendance of students attending alternative provision rigorously and frequently.
- The local authority's support for the school has been focused on supporting weaker departments. The creation of the Market Drayton Learning Partnership has facilitated collaboration with the other schools, so that, for example, students transferring from primary school benefit from similar approaches to literacy and numeracy.
- The governance of the school
 - Governors are providing effective oversight of the school. They have made sure that they are well trained and informed, and visit the school often to check on their judgements as to how effectively students are learning. Meeting records show that governors ask challenging and detailed questions about students' achievement and behaviour, and compare these with other schools nationally. Governors regularly review the quality of teaching. Governors are linked to specific departments, and some pay particular attention to the expenditure of the pupil premium, safeguarding and students who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
 - Governors work with the headteacher to operate the school's robust performance management scheme. They ensure that they and leaders only reward good teaching and identify quickly where there is weaker performance.
 - Governors check thoroughly that the school complies with all safeguarding requirements. They check the arrangements for school trips and monitor the safety of the site. They have a good grasp of how to prioritise expenditure, and have ensured that the school works within its budget.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, while improving, remains too variable to support good achievement. Although standards are rising, teaching has not ensured that students make consistently good progress across a range of subjects. Sometimes the strengths seen in the best teaching are present to only a limited extent. Some teaching in mathematics, science and geography remains weak.
- Weaker teaching is characterised by work that does not provide a challenge for all the students in the class, at least for part of the lesson. Sometimes tasks do not build properly on what students already know and can do, or time is wasted because students have to complete too much routine work before meeting a task that stretches them.
- The school has a clear policy that teachers should identify how students can improve their work and that students should respond. Although books are almost always marked in the prescribed manner, this policy is often applied ineffectively because students are given little or no time to make the response. This greatly reduces their ability to reflect on their work and learn from their mistakes.
- Relationships between teachers and students are clearly strong, and promote learning. In the minority of lessons where the work did not entirely engage their interest, they nevertheless remained polite and compliant. Teaching assistants fully understand the aims of the lessons, and so are able to provide effective support through rephrasing questions and breaking down learning into smaller steps. Homework makes an increasingly important contribution to students' learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and they insist on the correct use of subject-specific terms. Oracy (the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech) is promoted effectively, for example by expecting students to formulate extended and balanced answers, and giving them the time to do so. Teachers develop literacy by identifying errors in spelling and punctuation and by showing students how to structure their writing. In subjects requiring numeracy, teachers give students guidance on how to perform calculations.
- There is increasingly good and better teaching, particularly in the sixth form. Here teachers set tasks and asked questions which required considerable thought, so that students had to reconsider their views and deepen their understanding. Activities followed on smoothly and made significant demands on all the students and no time was wasted.
- Disabled students and those with special education needs learn well. They benefit from the school's tailored curriculum for Year 7 and Year 8 students who need to catch up. Staff who are well trained and fully understand the particular needs of individuals students pay particular attention to literacy and numeracy while ensuring that the students have access to the full curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good.
- Students feel very safe in school, and the parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire agree. The students that spoke with inspectors reported that the large school site is well supervised. They say that incidents of bullying are rare, and that staff deal with them effectively when they arise.
- The school teaches students, including those in the sixth form, how to be safe in many respects, including about online safety, the danger of substance abuse and the importance of sexual health. There are robust procedures for the recruitment of staff and the checking of visitors to the school. Leaders ensure that the medical needs of students are well met. Students know how to behave safely in science and design technology lessons.
- Students are generally assured and resilient learners, especially at Key Stage 3. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson, students were very keen to push themselves towards a deeper understanding and more skilful practical work. Inspectors observed staff working very hard to develop the confidence of a small number of Year 11 students who do not yet believe in their own academic potential.
- The school receives daily updates on the attendance of students on alternative provision, and any absence is pursued immediately. Students attending the alternative provision feel safe and are well supported.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are consistently positive, approaching their work with commitment and enthusiasm. They bring the right equipment to lessons, take pride in their appearance and usually present their books tidily. Students collaborate effectively when working in pairs or groups, and comment constructively on a partner's work. When the pace of learning slows, they sometimes become passive and look somewhat uninterested, but remain polite and patient.
- Students told inspectors that lessons are disrupted only on very rare occasions. Inspection evidence confirmed this.
- The school records behavioural incidents carefully. The introduction of stricter guidelines for behaviour in the spring of this year led to a temporary rise in fixed-term exclusion, but the rate is now in line with the national average and continues to fall.
- Attendance overall is average, and showing signs of improvement this academic year. The attendance of some groups has risen considerably, especially that of sixth formers, children in the care of the local authority, disabled students and those with special educational needs. Punctuality has also improved over the last year, and inspection evidence confirmed that it is high.
- Students are typically polite and helpful. Their conduct at social times is orderly and responsible. They respect the school's facilities and they drop very little litter.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The students who left the main school in 2014 started with attainment that was average, and left with attainment that was average overall. The proportions of students who made expected progress in English and in mathematics were in line with the national average. The proportion who made more than expected progress in mathematics was also in line with the national average, but the proportion who made more than expected progress in English was below average.
- Unvalidated results supplied by the school indicate that the 2015 GCSE results were broadly similar to 2014. However from a lower starting point, the students in Year 11 had made more progress than students in previous year groups across a range of subjects.
- Information supplied by the school and confirmed by inspection evidence indicates that achievement in mathematics, science and geography requires improvement in some year groups.
- Disadvantaged students left Year 11 in 2014 on average three quarters of a grade behind other students in English, and just over a grade in mathematics. Compared with students nationally, they were just over a half a grade behind in English, and a grade in mathematics. Information supplied by the school indicates that disadvantaged students are now making stronger progress in all year groups, and have considerably narrowed the gap with students nationally.

- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well. At Key Stage 3, the vast majority make rapid progress. They benefit from the school's use of the Year 7 catch-up funding to provide a phonics (letters and the sounds they make) programme to boost their reading and an intensive mathematics course for those who enter the school below a Level 4. When an inspector heard students read, he was able to confirm these outcomes. Most students with special educational needs also benefit from the tailored curriculum which continues into Year 8.
- Historically, the progress of the most able students has been similar to that of other students in the school and below that of students nationally. During the inspection, inspectors saw most-able students responding well where tasks challenged their thinking and encouraged them to be curious.
- Students across the school enjoy reading, and use the library as a good source of fiction books and reference materials.
- During the inspection, inspectors saw students making good progress in most subjects. This was particularly true in English, design technology and music. Standards in modern foreign languages, which have been low in the past, are now good.
- Those students on alternative provision make at least expected progress, often from low starting points.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The 16–19 study programmes are good. This is because the school has developed the range of courses in the sixth form, teaching and learning are good and standards are improving.
- Achievement on the 16–19 study programmes is rising. Historically, results at AS and A level have represented progress which is at or below the national average. In 2014, the school met the 16–19 interim minimum standards. However, unvalidated results provided by the school indicate that in 2015, progress and attainment rose on academic courses at AS level and on the growing number of vocational courses. All students who have not attained a grade C or higher in English or mathematics study the subject, and a good proportion succeed in achieving a higher grade.
- Leaders have taken key decisions which have markedly improved the study programmes. Students' progress and the quality of teaching are now checked following the procedures adopted in the main school. The range of courses has been broadened to provide more vocational courses, including some at Level 2.
- The vocational courses allow those entering the sixth form who have not achieved a raised threshold for AS courses to undertake programmes leading to relevant and challenging qualifications, sometimes over three years. This is particularly important in a rural area where alternative educational providers are sparse.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers demonstrated strong subject knowledge, and repeatedly asked penetrating questions which deepened students' understanding and provoked their curiosity. They set tasks which were clearly tailored to students' prior learning. Students knew in detail how they could improve their work.
- Students' attitudes to learning are characterised by a high level of aspiration and a good understanding of how their courses will enable them to fulfil their ambitions. In lessons, they concentrate hard, and persevere when tasks are challenging. Attendance in the sixth form has risen sharply.
- In discussion with inspectors, students spoke warmly of the support they receive from the school, and in particular from the learning mentor attached to the sixth form. They feel entirely safe, and value the wider opportunities, including relevant work experience, which are provided by the school. The school provides appropriate spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, for example by inviting the police to discuss issues of extremism with the sixth form.
- 16–19 careers advice is good. It is well integrated with advice and guidance in the main school, and includes links with two local universities. Students have access to consultations with an external advisor, and believe that the guidance they receive is impartial. Those seeking employment rather than higher education feel equally well supported.
- The overwhelming majority of students complete the year following their chosen courses, although historically some have changed their plans at the end of Year 12. Almost all students progress to their preferred destinations in higher education, apprenticeship or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	123580
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10005807

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	905
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Ingham
Headteacher	Mrs Sonia Taylor
Telephone number	01630 652121
Website	www.grove-school.co.uk
Email address	office@groveschool.eu
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school. In December 2014, it became part of the Market Drayton Learning Partnership, a cooperative trust with Market Drayton Junior School and Market Drayton Infant School. Each school retains its own governing body.
- The very large majority of students are White British.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium, which is the additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care, is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- At Key Stage 4, eight students currently attend the Walford Campus of North Shropshire College to follow work-related courses, and a very small number attend provision organised by Total People, Red George Farm, Fordhall Organic Farm or Market Drayton Mowers. These arrangements are for one day each week. A similarly small number of students at Key Stage 3 have taken up short-term full-time placements at the local authority's Tuition, Medical and Behaviour Support Service.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2014. A high proportion of the staff have been appointed since the last inspection, including 12 teachers who took up their posts in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 39 lessons. Three lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited an assembly and tutor time, and observed students' conduct at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders, class teachers, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with several groups of students, including some chosen at random, and spoke with many more informally. An inspector listened to students read in Year 7 and Year 8.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons. They scrutinised in depth a number of exercise books, including some from last academic year. They also looked at information on students' targets and current levels of achievement.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and their evaluations; curriculum plans; records showing how leaders check on teaching; minutes of governing body meetings; policies; reports to parents; and records showing how the school supports vulnerable students.
- The inspection team took into account the 61 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, and the school's own record of parental surveys. Inspectors also considered the 44 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Lockett	Ofsted Inspector

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