

# School inspection report

19 to 21 March 2024

## **The Grange School**

Bradburns Lane

Hartford

Northwich

CW8 1LU

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

## Contents

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	4
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....	6
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	8
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	10
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>11</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	12
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>13</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	13
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>16</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors have established effective monitoring systems to ensure that the school meets the Standards. Their active interest in all areas of school life contributes to the promotion of pupils' wellbeing in all areas. In turn, senior leaders carefully evaluate their success in instilling the school's values. These help pupils to become effective learners as well as respectful, sensitive and inclusive young adults.
2. Leaders in the early years provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment which enables almost all children to achieve their early learning goals. Children develop their social, creative, emotional, intellectual, and physical skills, and are well prepared for this next stage of learning.
3. The school offers a comprehensive range of subjects which meet pupils' needs and aptitudes at all levels. Teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects. This, combined with the positive, respectful relationships that prevail in most lessons, means that pupils are motivated to perform to the best of their ability. Pupils make good progress, and their results in public examinations reflect the high expectations which characterise teaching, particularly at A level. Planning is thorough and detailed in most areas. Some teaching activities in the junior school and in Years 7 to 9 are not matched to the needs of more able pupils, resulting in less rapid progress in those lessons where this occurs.
4. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities that contribute to pupils' self-confidence and sense of wellbeing and self-esteem.
5. Most pupils behave well because they espouse the school's values and because teachers manage behaviour effectively. In some classes, low-level disruption means that pupils' progress is less consistent.
6. The school's programme for personal and health education equips pupils with the values and life skills that prepare them for the next stage of their lives. A well-planned and taught physical education curriculum allows pupils to develop new skills to a high level, as well as promoting their resilience and self-confidence.
7. Most pupils understand and embrace the school's values of tolerance and respect. The careers programme is effective in introducing pupils to the possible pathways open to them, including alternatives to higher education. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills or contribute to decision-making about aspects of school life.
8. Comprehensive training provided by senior leaders ensures that staff, pupils and governors are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff know how to respond to concerns, and the school takes prompt action when required.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

### Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that teachers in the junior school and lower years of the senior school plan activities which challenge the more able pupils, so they make consistently good progress
- ensure that all teachers manage behaviour in lessons effectively in order to address any low-level disruption.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors know the school very well and are fully supportive of leaders' values and aspirations. Their visible presence, interest and passion for the school are instrumental in its development. They are keen to challenge and probe through activities such as the appraisal of senior leaders, the analysis of data relating to all areas of the school's operation and regular discussions with staff and pupils. They check the effective implementation of policies through a series of sub-committees where they use their wide range of expertise, knowledge and skills to offer support and guidance so that the school meets the Standards. In doing so, they successfully promote pupil wellbeing.
10. The senior leadership team ensures that all areas of the school are effectively managed and led through an evidence-based, consultative approach. For example, surveys and focus groups allow senior leaders to give due regard to pupil, staff, governor and parent voice, resulting in a collaborative approach to delivering the school's aims and values. Leaders are effective in identifying and addressing perceived relative weaknesses or areas for development. This includes adapting the curriculum to cater for the academic profile of particular year groups in the senior school.
11. Leaders in early years effectively promote the wellbeing of the children. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed in the setting and that all staff are appropriately trained. Children are suitably supervised, and appropriate staffing ratios are followed. They are reflective in their practice, for example they are enhancing their analysis of data to enhance teachers' planning.
12. The school gives pupils opportunities to take on leadership roles in areas of interest, for example in supporting neurodiversity. Leaders have recently provided more stability in the junior school environment by reverting to form-based teaching, and have responded to the growing number of mental health issues by improving the counselling provision. Leaders have initiated measures to address low-level disruptive behaviour where it occurs in some year groups in the senior school.
13. Leaders have established a systematic approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning that informs staff training and strategic planning. Visits to lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' work help to inform improvements. The sharing of effective practice is widely encouraged by leaders, for example through the use of video recording to enable peer critiquing of teaching methods. This has resulted in staff reflecting on their teaching performance, addressing weaknesses and improving effectiveness. There remain some inconsistencies in meeting the needs of the more able pupils in lessons in the junior school and years 7 to 9.
14. Leaders are fully committed to ensuring the school is an inclusive community. They are clear in their expectations relating to discrimination of any sort. These expectations are understood and mostly respected by pupils. A carefully drafted accessibility plan meets the needs of all pupils, including those with disabilities. Consultation with a range of different stakeholders in the development of building plans allows pupils with a more diverse range of needs to join the school.
15. Senior leaders and governors are particularly attentive to risk. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for all physical areas of the school and for any activities that are deemed to pose a risk, including offsite activities such as trips at home and abroad. Leaders are also alert to hidden and unexpected risks. For example, they have created additional support for pupils and channels of communication to encourage the disclosure of safeguarding concerns.

16. The school has an appropriate policy for the handling of parental complaints. The three-stage approach is carefully followed, investigations are thorough, and every attempt is made to resolve complaints within the published time frames. Leaders analyse each complaint for any learning points.
17. The school provides the required information through its website or through other documentation provided or made available to parents. Leaders provide appropriate information to the relevant external agencies in connection with pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, pupil absence and additions to and deletions from the admission register.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

- 18. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. The curriculum at all levels of the school is well balanced, broad and matched to the needs of the pupils. All required aspects are covered, with creative and aesthetic subjects well represented to cater for pupils' aptitudes and interest in these areas. The detailed planning undertaken by subject leaders results in schemes of learning that engage pupils and successfully promote the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding.
20. The early years curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for children to develop physically, socially and emotionally. Almost all children achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception. Teaching is effective in developing children's numeracy and communication skills.
21. Junior school leaders have established an effective phonics programme for children at an age-appropriate level, and teaching effectively develops pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers' planning encourages pupils to build critical thinking skills at Key Stage 3 before they embark on GCSE courses, with a focus on developing pupils' interest in individual subjects. In some lessons in the junior school and the lower years of the senior school, however, activities are not always matched to pupils' abilities, particularly the more able pupils, which results in inconsistent progress.
22. The school's extensive extra-curricular programme supports pupils' wellbeing and enables them to develop new skills. Consequently, they achieve at a high level in a wide range of sporting, artistic and creative endeavours, such as netball, football, rowing, drama and music. Lunchtime clubs offer pupils the opportunity to relax during an otherwise busy academic day, and leaders have provided other activities to support the more able academically.
23. Pupils achieve high levels of attainment in public examinations. Their grades at GCSE and A level show that they make progress that often exceeds the predictions based on their starting points.
24. Pupils who have SEND typically perform at least in line with their peers because leaders give careful thought to supporting them. In the junior school, pupils with identified needs are individually catered for through carefully structured tasks. In the senior school, subject leaders track the performance of pupils who have SEND carefully so that additional support can be provided in the form of bespoke resources and feedback. As a result, pupils with SEND are happy and engaged in their learning. They make good progress and often achieve beyond expected outcomes.
25. Leaders make arrangements to ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive support that is appropriate to their needs, for example by ensuring that they have a secure understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. This allows them to develop their English skills and participate in lessons with confidence.
26. Teachers are knowledgeable, skilful and caring. Most lessons are well planned and resourced, and teachers' obvious love of their subject engages and motivates pupils to make good progress. Specialist teaching and the effective use of resources in the junior school in technology, science, music, ICT and physical education have an equally positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers facilitate collaborative work in a positive environment which stems from relationships based on mutual respect. The atmosphere in lessons is mostly productive and relaxed, enabling pupils to develop resilience without fear of failure. In some classes at the lower end of the senior school, a minority of pupils struggle to engage with the lesson content and are therefore not always on task. Where this occurs, the learning of other pupils is limited.

27. Leaders have established appropriate systems for assessing pupils' work and monitoring their performance. In the junior school, staff track and assess pupil progress each term. In the senior school, recently introduced grade sheets at the end of each term enable pupils to understand where they are in their learning, what their teachers' expectations are and how to meet them. Pupils receive regular and detailed feedback on their work and respond to their teachers' comments on how they might improve.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

**28. All the relevant Standards are met.**



## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

29. Leaders tackle any behavioural issues fairly and share any learning points with the school community, so that similar incidents are avoided in the future. Behaviour is generally good, particularly in the junior school. Pupils are respectful, and most understand and follow the school's rules. However, in the senior school, low-level disruption in the classroom sometimes limits effective learning. Most teachers deal with these situations swiftly and skilfully. Leaders are aware of the issue and have introduced strategies which are beginning to have a positive effect, though these are not fully embedded and consistently implemented. Staff deal effectively with unkind behaviour and bullying. The system of consequences that leaders have established is understood by pupils.
30. From early years onwards, children are taught to be aware of and sensitive to each other's needs. Children in the early years are encouraged to take part in physical activities and healthy eating is explained and promoted. Staff help children to become independent and model good behaviour, which children seek to emulate in their interactions with each other.
31. Leaders are keen that pupils know and understand the importance of respecting differences such as disability, sexual orientation, race and religion or belief. As a result, pupils are quick to challenge any discriminatory behaviour.
32. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum are well planned and taught by skilled and experienced staff. Teachers are keen to encourage and answer pupils' questions openly so that they are prepared for the next stage of their life. 'Skills for life' lessons and workshops, alongside external speakers, provide additional opportunities for pupils to learn about the realities and practicalities of adult life. The school fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to consulting parents about the content of the RSE curriculum and giving parents the option to withdraw their child from sex education.
33. Leaders invest significant resources, effort and expertise in developing pupils' resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence, which reflects the effectiveness of the life skills and extra-curricular programmes. Where pupils have issues, they have access to pastoral mentors, counsellors and wellbeing spaces. The enrichment programme provides opportunities for spiritual awareness and self-reflection. The PSHE curriculum is effective in encouraging pupils to reflect on moral and spiritual issues, giving them an understanding of what influences human thinking, by discussing, for example, the ideas behind 'The Chimp Paradox' or the work of Amnesty International.
34. The physical education curriculum offers significant breadth and variety so that pupils' engagement in PE lessons is assured. This begins in the early years, where children benefit from the teaching of specialists. The expertise of teachers and coaches helps pupils to understand the importance of physical health, and pupils throughout the school perform to a high level in a range of activities that they find challenging and stimulating.
35. The school premises and accommodation comprise modern, light airy buildings that are well maintained by a dedicated support staff. The school is efficient and thorough in its implementation of procedures for health and safety, fire safety and first aid. Suitable accommodation is provided for pupils who become unwell, and a sufficient number of trained staff complement the work of two

part-time nurses to administer first aid and medical care in a timely manner. This includes paediatric first aid trained teaching assistants in early years.

36. The systems for maintaining admissions and attendance registers are robust, allowing staff to identify pupils at risk of missing education through prolonged absence. The school fulfils its statutory duty to inform the local authority of potential safeguarding risks in relation to pupils arriving at or departing from the school at non-standard points.
37. Careful supervision of pupils throughout the school allows pupils to feel safe. This includes the deployment of required ratios of staff to children in early years throughout the day. The decision taken by leaders to ensure that the majority of pupils are occupied in activities at lunchtime creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

- 38. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

39. The school's expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour reflect British values such as tolerance, respect and individual liberty. Pupils understand and articulate these because they form the branches of the school's 'values tree'. The importance of those values and how they translate into action is successfully taught as part of PSHE and through assemblies, visiting speakers and trips. Leaders have been keen to introduce initiatives supporting diversity and inclusion, which pupils have embraced, for example by contributing to the school's ambition of being granted Rainbow Flag accreditation.
40. From Reception upwards, pupils have a secure understanding about how to treat people fairly and know the difference between right and wrong. However, a small minority do not always reflect that in their day-to-day behaviour. From a young age, pupils develop their understanding and respect of other races, cultures and religions, and are taught to challenge misconceptions.
41. Pupils benefit from a broad and rich careers guidance programme which builds throughout their time in senior school. It includes helpful guidance on option choices for GCSE and A level and recently introduced work experience for pupils in Year 10. The programme also includes an 'enhanced admissions programme' which aims to identify and support pupils who may consider applying for universities with more competitive entry requirements. The careers programme is not limited to university entrance. Leaders are keen to educate pupils about the opportunities provided by apprenticeships and other pathways, an area of growing interest within the pupil body.
42. Leaders prepare pupils for life in British society through 'skills for life' sessions across both junior and senior sections. Pupils learn relationship skills and how positive thinking can help overcome obstacles and challenges they may encounter in life. For example, they examine the advantages and disadvantages of social media, and in Year 9 pupils develop skills for their future wellbeing and employability, learning the importance of making the right choices. This begins in Reception, where children learn about looking after things, for example friends and the environment. Pupils learn about managing risk and about understanding media bias. Year 8 pupils complete a unit in PSHE on the law and legal systems and all pupils undergo active bystander training.
43. Economic education is developed well from a very early age. Children in early years learn the concept of looking after money, and Year 1 and 2 pupils explore prioritising money, considering for example whether to spend all their pocket money on sweets or save it for a toy they want. Older pupils learn the importance of financial wellbeing as well as practical information around banking. In the sixth form pupils learn about budgeting and finance relative to adulthood and university, for example debt arising from credit cards and student loans.
44. Throughout the school, there are numerous opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles, as prefects, as members of various focus groups, for example on the shape of the new school day, or as leaders of special interest groups such as the one focusing on neurodiversity. As well as encouraging pupils to contribute to and feel a part of the school community, leaders create opportunities for them to serve the wider local community, for example by visiting local care homes, choosing their own charities to support and donating to local food banks.

45. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and experience democracy at first hand, for example through voting for members of the school council or prefects or learning about proportional representation as opposed to 'first past the post' in PSHE lessons. Teachers are careful in lessons to give and encourage balanced views on complex and challenging political issues, from the George Floyd case in the USA to the political dimension of global water scarcity.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

**46. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

47. The school has a robust safeguarding culture. The governing body, supported by the governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding, provides active and focused support to the school's safeguarding team. Governors challenge leaders to evaluate their responses to situations that arise. Consequently, pupils at risk or in need receive timely help. Leaders are quick to consult external agencies for advice and guidance.
48. The safeguarding team is knowledgeable and well organised. Reporting systems are clear and considered. An awareness of the need to 'prepare for the unexpected' prevails. Leaders give careful thought to the means that pupils have at their disposal to share concerns. As well as channels that allow them to report concerns anonymously, pupils know that they can report worries or anxieties to any trusted adult. This empowers them to seek help when they need it. When they do so, the school takes prompt and unequivocal action. Pupils also have access to many layers of assistance and guidance from the pastoral team, and this support is structured so matters can be escalated, where needed, all the way up to the executive head. Senior pupils feel a sense of responsibility towards safeguarding younger ones and receive training which enables them to contribute to their wellbeing. This includes the training and deployment of senior pupils as mental health first-aiders.
49. Safeguarding training is regular and effective. Staff and governors demonstrate the necessary knowledge and understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to respond to various scenarios, including issues relating to radicalisation and child-on-child abuse. They understand how to recognise signs and indicators and how to report a safeguarding concern.
50. Online safety is a key priority for leaders, not only in terms of educating pupils effectively through computing, PSHE and life skills lessons, but also extending to decisions around the devices pupils are allowed in school and robust systems for filtering and monitoring pupils' online activity. Life skills lessons are also effective in equipping pupils with the necessary strategies to keep safe in everyday situations beyond those that arise online.
51. The school's recruitment procedures are robust. Adults are not allowed to begin employment or volunteer at the school before the required checks have been undertaken. Leaders maintain a suitable single central record of appointments.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 52. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	The Grange School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	896/6005
<b>Registered charity number</b>	525918
<b>Address</b>	The Grange School Bradburns Lane Hartford Northwich Cheshire CW8 1LU
<b>Phone number</b>	01606 539039
<b>Email address</b>	head@grange.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.grange.org.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Grange School Hartford Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Trevor Brocklebank
<b>Executive head</b>	Dr Lorraine Earps
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1220
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 to 5 December 2019

## Information about the school

53. The Grange School is a co-educational day school located in the village of Hartford, on the south-western edge of the town of Northwich. The Early Years Foundation Stage and junior school are located together, half-a-mile from the senior school. The school is overseen by a board of governors.
54. The early years provision comprises three Reception classes for children aged four to five years.
55. The school has identified 136 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is an additional language for 23 pupils.
57. The school states its aims are to encourage and enable pupils to achieve the best of which they are capable; to promote intellectual curiosity and encourage a love of learning; to provide pupils with opportunities to develop and discover interests and talents beyond the curriculum; to work collaboratively with others; to be sensitive to needs other than their own; to develop a sound moral framework and an appreciation of the spiritual dimension to life.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

19 to 21 March 2024

58. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

59. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

60. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.



**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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