

Local Authority School Improvement Partner Report 2024 - 2025

The Grove			
Headteacher	Penelope Derries		
Chair of Governors	George Murray		
School Improvement Partner	Ann Muxworthy		
Dates of meetings	Autumn: 20 September, 18 December 2024	Spring: 14 January, 17 March 2025	Summer:
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership, curriculum, current priorities, school building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership, curriculum, current priorities, Ofsted discussion Learning walk and class teacher discussions 	

Last Inspection: **Outstanding Dec 2019**

Overall Effectiveness	○	Quality of Education	○	Behaviours and Attitudes	○	Personal Development	○	Leadership and Management	○	Sixth form	○
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Inspection AFIs

- None

Link to the school's Ofsted page: [The Grove Special School - Open - Find an Inspection Report - Ofsted](#)

The school currently regards its strengths to be:

- The Autumn term discussion and evidence shared shows the school remains strong in all areas. The headteacher is very experienced and provides strong leadership. She is instrumental in working with staff to further develop the curriculum. She is diligent in ensuring the school development plan priorities focus on areas that will provide further improvements in school practices. She knows the strengths of her school and is ambitious to make improvements for her pupils.
- Leaders remain ambitious to continually improve the school amenities. Classrooms are well organised to support learning. The headteacher is ambitious for continued high-quality provision. Although the school site is becoming more limited to expand classroom provision, the headteacher has addressed this through investing in a new hall and improvements to outdoor spaces. These improvements are in progress and will allow easier access to equipment, better use of the hall and further improvements for the outdoor curriculum.

- The staff team are very experienced. Across the team they confidently lead on areas of the curriculum.
- Parents say they are well informed about their children and the progress they are making. The school keeps this under review to ensure their reporting engages well with parents.
- Staff well-being and succession planning are considered well. Staff support is very good in school, and they have access to courses that provide them with leadership qualifications. This is encouraged by the headteacher.
- The school often provides advice to other schools to develop their practices. They draw on the expertise within school to share practice.
- Personal development is a strength because of the wide opportunities available and a well-planned PSHE curriculum. Promoting independence through activities in and out of school supports the pupils to gain in confidence beyond school. Activity passports for each child record the opportunities pupils are accessing over the year. The school's website offers resources parents can access to give them information on activities they can do with their child at home for their personal development. This information, for example, gives guidance on diversity to support discussion beyond school.

The school currently regards the areas for development to be:

- Leaders are focusing on diversity and have planned activities that help pupils' understanding. There will be training on diversity and culture for staff.
- Work is being completed on transgender guidance.
- Leaders are looking at how they inform parents of progress over time through use of EHCPs, parent meetings, reports etc. They will be making improvements based on their findings.
- Theme pack plans will be on the website and in school staff will be sharing a planning grid. This is to ensure effective curriculum coverage.
- Complete the new building developments.

	National 23- 24 (source: here)			Autumn	Spring	Summer
	Primary	Secondary	Special			
Current number on roll	275	1063	149	51	52	number
Overall attendance	94.5%	90.9%	87.0%	92.6%	90.77%	%
% Persistent absentees	15.2%	26.7%	37.6%	-	-	% (number)
PP attendance	91.9%	85.4%	84.9%	-	87.72	% (number)
% and number of EHCPs	3.0%	2.7%	99.2%	100%	100%	% (number)
% and number of FSM pupils	24.3%	24.1%	47.4%	25%	25%	% (number)

Length of the school week	6 hours	Guidance: Length of the school week - non-statutory guidance
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Reminders for the headteacher

The SIP reminded the headteacher of the following statutory duties and recommendations:

- Have governors read [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (updated September 2024)?
- Have all staff (including volunteers) have read at least part 1 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (updated September 2024)?
- Are your objectives within the school accessibility plan challenging and reflective of the main accessibility challenges your school faces?
- Are current equality objectives SMART?
- Can all staff and governors articulate what the current equality objectives are and how close the school is to achieving them?
- Is the school website compliant with the most recent statutory guidance? ([maintained schools](#)) ([academies/free schools](#))
- Has [Parent view feedback](#) been reviewed?
- Are [Ofsted 'requested' documents](#) (paragraph 109) in place?

Autumn Term

- The visits to classrooms this Autumn term showed high engagement of the pupils in lessons. For example, in the PMLD group every pupil was working on an individual activity. Each activity matched the learning objective for the pupil and each member of staff knew the communication and learning they were looking for. It was evident that staff knew the pupils well and could identify the progress pupils were making when asked.
- In Beech Class this is supported teaching with the deputy headteacher supporting a Lead Practitioner to gain her teaching qualification. The Lead Practitioner will then complete her two ECT years starting in September 2025 in Elm Class.
- There are additional wider curriculum activities at The Grove, this is to ensure greater variety to meet the range of needs in school. Exciting opportunities like using beach wheelchairs has been introduced and all pupils get to go to Alnwick Gardens to access their offer for work-related learning. Residential holidays are also taken up well and enthusiastically talked about by staff and pupils.
- The school budget is well-managed, and this is helping the developments of the building works. This will allow redecoration in school this October. The new hall will be ready by February. The headteacher will then reassess the budget to see if the playground phases can be completed next year.
- The headteacher is mindful of leadership capacity and has staff doing NPQSL, other leadership courses and training for class leads. Two staff have been working on developing pupil records for all staff and the quality they would want. Staff mentor in formal and informal ways for other staff including the teaching assistants. Modelling good practice is a fundamental of the school. Currently, the headteacher is thinking about class leadership for next year.

- Governance engages very well with the school. Their experience and knowledge of the school means they know the questions to ask. This ensures they are kept current on decisions made and the quality of provision in school.
- Regular updates to safeguarding and a knowledgeable DSL means staff and governors are kept current in updates and developments.

Emerging questions

- What is the impact of the additions to the wider curriculum and the new pupil reports?
- What are the new reporting improvements to parent information?
- How well is the new planning format working for the curriculum across school?

Spring Term

- The SIP observed that all staff are well prepared for Ofsted (which is expected this term). The headteacher is a strong leader, who has much experience and as a result there is a shared and consistent approach to the care and education of all pupils. Staff have benefitted from regular and carefully targeted CPD.
- The spring term discussion on staffing identified a member of staff with a serious illness which has impacted on the whole staff team. The headteacher would not like this member of staff to be visited by Ofsted. There is an ECT training in school with Three Rivers. Another member of staff will be leaving soon. The headteacher has planned for these staffing developments.
- The building is still under development and tradespeople are on site. This is presenting some disruption to the school and its timetable.
- There are 4 pupils from Scotland currently on roll and the remainder from Northumberland LA. Only one pupil in EYFS and 15 in post 16.
- The headteacher has Ann Muxworthy as the wellbeing contact for her in school.
- The headteacher says there are no community tensions around the school currently.
- The headteacher will involve other leaders in the discussions with Ofsted as they are very knowledgeable in their areas.
- Governors are very experienced and make regular school visits. They are very knowledgeable about the work of the school.
- Strengths in curriculum are the following:
 - It is strong because it fits the needs of the pupils from early years to post 16 and ensures the progress they make.
 - The two pathways are clear and consider the learning, communication, social and emotional needs of pupils. MAPP assessment supports the PMLD pupils. The other pathway uses B Squared and 'I can' statements to track progress. Learning intentions are matched to carefully set small steps of progress made. These records can be seen in classrooms. National curriculum is included and teaching predominantly uses KS1 and KS2 coverage and considerations for preparation for adulthood to meet pupils' learning needs. Creative arts and humanities widen the education of pupils in and beyond their community.
 - Communication systems underpin curriculum access. School uses PEC, pointing books, alternative communication and Makaton. Close working with the speech therapist ensures bespoke approaches are used well. This is very apparent in different classrooms across school.
 - British values are an important golden thread through personal development; they are integrated through the programme of work.
 - Preparation for adulthood is also woven into the curriculum as a golden thread.

- Phonics is delivered through the Jolly Phonics programme and there is a clear intention to encourage reading for children. Reading and literacy are part of everything in school. The library is stocked with a range of carefully chosen quality texts. Those pupils not accessing the phonics programme are supported to acquire and use sight vocabulary very well. Those children not at the phonic stage also have excellent support for their individual pre-reading stage. Rhyme work is used to support phonic blending.
 - Numeracy and maths across school are supported by MAPP targets and learning intentions. The planning considers key life skills to support everyone. Numeracy skills are taught across the curriculum.
 - EHCPs drive learning intent supported by the curriculum. Leaders want outstanding progress for pupils. They consider all needs including emotional and other therapy needs to maximise learning opportunities.
- The culture of support and wellbeing drives strong relationships between staff and pupils and knowledge of their needs. This also supports strong pedagogy from the staff.
 - PSHE is a fundamental part of curriculum and led well.
 - Attendance is good. A case study of the school's response to low attendance demonstrates how it is being addressed with the support of social care, the school and other agencies.
 - The SEF and school development plan are up to date.
 - The school shares its expertise to support other schools in the community. This is achieved through staff training, staff visiting school and supporting the development of a North SEND placement panel.

LEARNING WALK

Classes were observed across age groups and SEND needs. Discussions took place with class teachers on learning, teaching and use of assessment. The following strengths were observed:

- Across classes there is some excellent practice in developing pupils' communication skills. In the PMLD class the teaching team are extremely skilled in using equipment such as the eye gazers for tracking and making choices. For example, they use advice from therapists to develop tracking using a light for one pupil to follow. This is proving very successful as the pupil moved her head to follow. Staff were using an eye gazer with the pirate's game to choose colours to successfully engage the pupil. The pupil chose the colour and then the pirate flew into the air. Both pupils and staff enjoyed the pirate flying out. Another pupil interacted with the teacher in responding to a curtain being moved. The pupil indicated when she wanted to peep out. This activity was elicited an enjoyable response for the pupil whose communication needs are significant. A counting activity for another pupil linked to singing about a speckled frog is helping the pupil see the sequence of the numbers. Across the group activities are individualised. Staff are continuously assessing responses from the pupils and the progress they are making. They demonstrate a high level of expertise and are very articulate in explaining the learning in the group.
- The younger pupils with autism are being taught by a teacher with strong expertise and experience. Pupils in this group are improving their regulation because routines are familiar, the structure of the day is supporting the needs of this group well. The teacher expertise helps them to re-engage. Teacher tasks for learning are well-planned. A pupil exploring early number (recognition of 1- 4) is moving on from counting, to matching to pictures then using Numicom. The teacher is clear about the next steps for the pupils and teacher inform the planning of next steps and assessment of what is being achieved.

- There are two older pupil groups which are designed to prepare pupils for adulthood with life skills, independence and qualifications they can use in their future. In one class there is an excellent focus on reading and English. The teacher uses her knowledge of English well. She focuses on making the pupils' stories more creative. Pupils have the task of changing the main character. One pupil says Alexander Isak (Swedish footballer) another was thinking Mike Wazowski (Disney Monsters Inc). The teacher has high expectations of the work she wants from the pupils. The books show the building of the tasks in the pupils' writing. Pupils are engaging well in their work and a good understanding of their task. A smaller older group are working on life skills and making soup as part of an enterprise activity which they will later sell. Pupils can use previous learning to explain how much money they expect to make from their sales and how this is worked out. Behaviour is excellent in the group and transition through activities are understood well.
- The other class of older pupils has pupils with autism and learning needs. The pupils have significant difficulties with regulation and social interactions. The staff understand the pupils well and can say how they support each pupil. During snack time pupils were choosing what they would like. IPADs and communication books are being used. Choices were successfully communicated. Relationships with staff are strong and their understanding of the pupils is evident in how they were using their transitions from one activity to another.
- In another class pupils were all working on individual activities. Reading and phonics were being taught well. Pupils were using books, practising sounds and developing their understanding of position words such as 'the sink is right of the mirror'. Fiction books were giving interest to science. Teamwork was strong using effective support and intervention to reading and life skills work.
- Class teachers can explain well the learning taking place and why activities are chosen. Use of clipboards are helpful in letting pupils know what they are covering and what they will do next.
- Where team teaching tasks are used staff are developing excellent assessment skills. This is going very well in PMLD. In the staff team with younger pupils the teacher over the year is developing staff skills to ensure she gets consistency in teaching with these complex pupils.
- Teachers give pupils challenging targets that are interesting and focused.
- Examples were observed of exemplary teaching in lessons. Strengths are in supporting communication, developing early literacy and numeracy, assessment and individual planning.

Emerging questions

- Are current checks on staff recording against learning intentions helpful in showing progress?
- Are the new improvements to outside areas being used well by staff?

Summer Term

Emerging questions

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TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEADTEACHER

Other information to note/feedback

- The headteacher continues to appreciate the support that Ann gives the school. The years of knowledge and experience that she has is invaluable to the team. Ann has worked with the school for many years, she knows all the children by name and can comment individually on the children's progress.

Requests to the LA for further support

- Support for the next inspection