

Grindon Hall Christian School

Nookside, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 8PG

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders do not have effective systems in place to ensure that the much needed actions to improve teaching and pupils' achievement can be implemented swiftly. They are overly-reliant on the support of an external consultant to identify appropriate ways forward.
- Pupils are not adequately safeguarded. Leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency to address weaknesses identified from recent incidents. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of the risks they may encounter to enable them to feel and stay safe.
- The curriculum does not adequately prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils show a lack of respect and tolerance towards those who belong to different faiths, cultures or communities.
- Recruitment procedures are lax. Many appointments are made without fair and open competition. Leaders cannot assure themselves that they have achieved value for money by securing the very best people for each job.
- Prejudice-based bullying, while reported on, is not tackled effectively enough. Discrimination through racist or homophobic language persists.
- Governors have insufficient oversight of safeguarding, recruitment, the quality of teaching and the curriculum. They are not in a position to ensure that urgent and rapid improvement occurs.
- Leaders have failed to address weaknesses in pupils' writing. There is no whole-school strategy to support those who have underachieved.
- Teachers do not always demonstrate high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. The most able pupils often go unchallenged and consequently, too many do not achieve as highly as they should.
- Behaviour requires improvement. Pupils swing on their chairs, talk to their friends or generally waste time when tasks are not pitched at the correct level for their differing abilities.
- Children in the early years do not make as much progress as they should. Activities do not consistently offer enough challenge to capitalise on their typical and above typical starting points.
- Leadership of the sixth form is weak. Too many pupils underachieve given their starting points at the end of Key Stage 4.

The school has the following strengths

- Musical opportunities and a programme of competitive sport are well received by pupils and enrich the curriculum effectively.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and visitors. They take a pride in their appearance and are willing to learn when teaching is pitched at the correct level for their abilities.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was undertaken at the direction of the Secretary of State for Education. Under s8(1) of the Education Act 2005 the Chief Inspector, if requested by the Secretary of State to inspect a school, must inspect and report on that school. Using the Chief Inspector's discretionary powers under section 9 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) this inspection was treated as if it were an inspection conducted under section 5.
- Inspectors visited 37 lessons or parts of lessons. They observed the quality of teaching and learning, looked at the current standard of pupils' work and entered into informal discussion with pupils about their learning, progress and experiences of school.
- Six lessons were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors visited three assemblies, form time, enrichment lessons and 'target time' in the primary phase. They listened to a number of pupils read, observed pupils around school and during break times and looked at the quality of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and other senior leaders, those with leadership responsibility for the early years, special educational needs and the sixth form, and with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors.
- Inspectors spoke to six different groups of pupils from Year 2 to Year 13. In total, inspectors spoke formally with 58 pupils. HMI also spoke informally to a number of other pupils during lessons, break times and while they were moving between their lessons.
- The inspection took account of the 41 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) recorded since the start of the 2014 academic year. One inspector also spoke to a group of parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' learning and progress, the checks made on the quality of teaching and performance of staff and those relating to curriculum, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lee Owston, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marianne Young	Her Majesty's Inspector
Phil Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- Grindon Hall Christian School is smaller than the average-sized school. It caters for pupils aged 4 to 18. The number of pupils on roll in the primary and secondary phases are smaller than for equivalent schools nationally. However, the school has almost doubled in size over recent years, especially in the primary phase, and there are currently more applications to join the school than the number of places available.
- The school opened as a free school in September 2012, having previously been an independent school since 1988. The school was judged to require improvement at the time of its last inspection. It received a visit from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in September 2014 to check on its improvement strategy.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for support through the pupil premium) is well-below the national average. There are fewer than ten disadvantaged pupils in each year group. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6 and Year 11 in English and mathematics.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils accessing alternative provision.
- The school uses early GCSE entry in English literature for Year 10 pupils.
- Early years provision caters for reception-aged children. They are taught in three classes and attend full time.
- A number of new leaders have taken up post since the last inspection. Shortly before the inspection, a new leader has been appointed to oversee the early years and a part-time member of staff has become the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) for the primary phase.
- The school has sought support from an external consultant who has been employed initially for four months. The Principal is in negotiations for this support to continue for the foreseeable future. The school has also engaged with Emmanuel College Teaching School Alliance to access professional development for staff. This partnership working is in the very early stages of development.
- Grindon Hall provides the financial services of their Bursar for one day a week to Durham Free School. This contract commenced in January 2014 and will cease at the end of the calendar year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality and impact of leaders, managers and governance, including in the sixth form, by:
 - setting more ambitious targets for what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring there is a consistent approach to tracking pupils' achievements across each key stage
 - monitoring the performance of staff more frequently so they are held to account for their work and understand the link between the quality of their teaching, the progress made by pupils and the rewards available through their pay
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so they can take a full and active role in planning, implementing and evaluating improvements to pupils' progress
 - implementing a broad and balanced approach to the curriculum that exploits all opportunities, including

assemblies and form time, to teach pupils about the fundamental British values they will need to live in modern Britain

- make sure recruitment procedures are fair, open and transparent; secure the very best people for the job and ensure good value for money
- ensuring the outcomes of the pupil premium and governance reviews are implemented rapidly so that there is appropriate and effective oversight of the school's work.

■ Ensure all pupils feel and are kept safe and are well-prepared for life in modern Britain by:

- ensuring all staff comply with the requirements of the school's health and safety policy
- analysing incidents of poor behaviour and bullying so that the root cause of this conduct is understood, acted upon quickly and leads to a reduction in the number of exclusions and repeated incidents
- implementing an effective programme of personal development, including sex and relationships education, so that pupils have a forum to raise issues, discuss the risks to which they may be exposed and feel better prepared to make important decisions in later life
- raising pupils' awareness of equality and diversity in Britain today so that they are respectful and tolerant to those who belong to different faiths, cultures and communities.

■ Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables all pupils, especially those who are most able, to be challenged in their learning and reach their full potential, by:

- ensuring teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
- planning lessons that take account of what pupils already know and can do so that they are fully challenged in their learning, interested in their work and willing to respond to teachers' questions
- providing enough time for pupils to reflect and respond to questions, ensuring teachers take account of pupils' responses to adapt the lesson where necessary and address any misunderstandings
- sharing the best aspects of marking and feedback in the primary phase across the wider school, ensuring there is enough time for pupils to respond to teachers' comments
- increasing the opportunities for pupils to write at length and solve mathematical problems in a range of subjects and contexts
- ensuring children in the early years have greater opportunity to develop their learning through a range of activities they can choose for themselves, including in the outdoor environment
- ensuring those pupils resitting their GCSEs in the sixth form are adequately supported to achieve a better grade.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders, including governors, do not demonstrate the necessary skills to bring about rapid improvement. Much time has been spent in formulating improvement priorities and this has wasted time in getting to grips with the fundamental issues of teaching and leadership that are preventing better performance. Weak management systems and poor oversight by governors have not enabled discrepancies in safeguarding procedures or the curriculum to be addressed.
- Recruitment procedures are lax. A significant number of appointments have been made without undertaking a process of fair and open competition. Staff have been employed based on personal connections to existing members of staff or acquaintances from previous schools. In such cases, there has been no effort to secure suitable references about the quality of their work.
- The leadership of teaching is weak. Improvement plans are lengthy. High expectations and measures of success are not communicated well enough to staff and governors. Leaders do not check up on new initiatives quickly to know if they are making a discernible enough difference to teaching and achievement. Reviews of teaching quality do not focus sufficiently on the progress different pupils make, especially those who are most able, so that teaching practices can be improved and good progress becomes the norm.
- Until very recently, leaders have used tracking systems that only aim for pupils to make expected progress. Too few pupils make good progress across the school, especially those who are most able, because a glass ceiling has been placed on what pupils are capable of achieving. Leaders do not track progress in the early years or Key Stage 3 as well as they should to ensure all pupils reach their potential.
- Staff accountability is poor. There are insufficient links between school priorities, the targets set to improve teaching and salary progression. Leaders and governors view salary increases as a right rather than a reward. Too little attention has been given to teachers' performance before approving a pay award.
- Middle leaders are not involved in the monitoring of initiatives in their areas of responsibility. They have not contributed to improvement plans and have received little support to develop their skills.
- Pupil premium funding is not always used for the benefit of eligible pupils. While most is used to provide additional support, for example through one-to-one teaching, around 30% of the allocated budget last year was used to recruit a Vice-Principal, a SENCO and a data analyst due to increasingly strained school finances. These roles do not have a defined focus on narrowing the gaps in achievement for disadvantaged pupils. This is ineffective use of public money.
- Leaders are too reliant on the support of an external consultant to identify appropriate ways forward. Work around improvement planning and the reviews of governance and pupil premium funding have not had the impact that is needed because there has been a focus on paper work rather than on taking effective action. Partnership working with other schools has been slow to develop.
- The school's curriculum is limiting pupils' readiness for life in modern Britain. A significant proportion of pupils are unaware, for example, of the diversity that exists within modern British society. They have not been taught about the range of beliefs and opinions that people may hold that differ to their own. As such, pupils do not readily accept that there may be alternative viewpoints to those they hold.
- Pupils are not taught to develop appropriate levels of respect or tolerance for those from other faiths, cultures or communities. For example, pupils spoken to during the inspection found it difficult to name a religion other than Christianity or to identify any festivals that other faiths or cultures may celebrate. This is despite learning alongside some peers who are non-Christian. The school's efforts to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination are inadequate.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is ineffective. There are notable strengths in the musical and sporting opportunities pupils can pursue. However, the wider curriculum, including form time and the school's assembly programme, has too narrow a focus to enable pupils to think for themselves and reflect about the fundamental British values needed to live in Britain today.
- Students, in Years 8 to 13, do not have access to appropriate information, advice and guidance about their next steps when leaving the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have been insufficiently involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school so that weaknesses in safeguarding, the breadth and balance of the curriculum and the achievement of the most able pupils have gone unchecked. Governors have not ensured that all pupils feel and stay safe or that they are adequately prepared for life in modern Britain.
 - Weaknesses in recruitment have gone unnoticed. Governors do not identify the risks associated with

employing someone without undertaking suitable references. While relevant members of the governing body have been trained in safer recruitment procedures, they have not ensured these procedures are undertaken as a routine course of action. There has been no oversight of safeguarding checks.

- Governors have not ensured a direct link between the performance of staff in the classroom and the rewards they receive through their pay. Governors do not check regularly enough to see if additional money, such as the pupil premium, is being used effectively to make a difference to the pupils it is intended to support. Actions arising from the review of pupil premium spending have not been implemented. The governing body's role in overseeing finances and ensuring value for money is weak.
- Recent appointments have begun to strengthen the challenge offered by governors around achievement and teaching but this is not routine. Even when probing questions are posed, there is no system in place for governors to verify what they have been told through their own processes of checking and evaluation. Governors are too reliant on the information provided by senior leaders, which is not always accurate. Recommendations from a recent review of governance have not been implemented.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils, including in the sixth form, requires improvement. When activities are pitched at the incorrect level for pupils' abilities or fail to interest and engage them, attitudes to learning slip and pupils' concentration wanes. Inspectors observed a number of pupils swinging on their chairs, looking out of the window or doodling to occupy their time. This off-task behaviour slows pupils' progress.
- School records indicate that the proportion of pupils excluded from school is broadly average over time. Leaders have not analysed data relating to these incidents effectively enough in order to establish actions to reduce them. Exclusion is not an effective deterrent for some pupils because the root cause of such poor behaviour is not always tackled effectively on their return to school. As such, there are some repeat exclusions for similar issues.
- Pupils are courteous and polite to adults and visitors, take pride in their appearance and attend school regularly. The vast majority of pupils adhere to the school's high standards of dress and move around the school sensibly. Pupils are generally well supervised; secondary staff frequently check pupils during transfer between classes to ensure uniform standards are maintained.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate.
- Some pupils explained to inspectors that they do not feel safe. Serious safeguarding incidents over the last year, while investigated by senior leaders, have not been analysed so that lessons can be learned and the risk of any future incidents minimised. Leaders have not instigated a review of the curriculum to ensure it takes account of pupils' lack of awareness about e-safety and aspects of sex and relationships education. There is no open forum for pupils to discuss these issues in school and they are inadequately prepared to enable them to assess the risks to which they may be exposed in Britain today.
- Pupils have little confidence in the school's systems to address bullying. While incidents are reported and logged, the use of derogatory language relating to race or sexual orientation persists because the curriculum does not teach pupils about equality, diversity and the need to be tolerant and respectful towards those who are different to themselves. Pupils' response to inspectors' questions showed immaturity and a lack of awareness in discussing these matters.
- Policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, including the school's health and safety policy, are not always adhered to by staff or acted upon by leaders. Inspectors observed younger pupils being left unsupervised during lunch time and pupils being sent out of class without adequate supervision.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time is variable so that some pupils do not achieve as highly as they should given their starting points. While pupils typically make steady progress, leaders have not been rigorous enough in their monitoring of teaching to ensure that learning is consistently strong and a greater proportion of pupils make the progress they should to achieve well.

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations, particularly for the most able. Leaders are aware that some staff are content for pupils to reach only expected standards in their work and this prevents all pupils from reaching their full potential. While assessment information is collected at regular intervals, it is not always used by teachers to plan work that is pitched at the correct level for pupils. While some pupils find work too easy, others need constant support because they find it too difficult.
- Teachers do provide additional work for the most able pupils but not until they have completed the tasks given to all pupils. More able pupils, therefore, often cover ground which they have already mastered before learning anything new and this slows their progress.
- Questioning is used frequently by staff to check whether pupils have understood the content of the lesson. However, not all teachers are skilled at responding to pupils' responses to address misconceptions and provide more support or challenge to move learning forward. Some teachers do not give pupils enough time to consider their response and offer a reply themselves before moving on to the next question. This leads to fewer pupils being willing to respond and contributes to some of the off-task behaviour observed by inspectors.
- Pupils have an appropriate grasp of grammar, punctuation, spelling and basic number but do not get frequent enough opportunities to use these skills. Scrutiny of pupils' work over time reveals that there are few opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in different contexts or subject areas. Pupils are given insufficient time to develop their skills through writing at length or by solving mathematical problems.
- Marking is stronger in the primary year groups than in the secondary phase because there has been a push from leaders to improve the quality of feedback pupils receive. Teachers consistently highlight to pupils the strengths of their work and where it could be made better. Pupils are given time to respond to these comments so that improvements can be made though the frequency of this, even in primary, is variable across classes.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils make variable progress as they move through the school because teaching is not consistently good enough. Over time, leaders have not acted swiftly to bring about improvement. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Pupils make steady progress across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Progress is stronger in reading than in writing or mathematics due to additional time each day for this subject. The progress pupils make in their writing, in particular, has not improved sufficiently over time. In 2014, the school remained one of the lowest performing nationally in this aspect of English.
- The proportion of pupils achieving five good GCSEs including English and mathematics declined in 2014. Inspection evidence, from lesson observations and work in books, shows that not enough pupils, especially those who are the least and most able, make good progress in their learning across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- Most pupils exhibit strong grammar, punctuation and calculation skills but are considerably weaker at using these to compose extended pieces of writing or solve problems. Training has not been provided to support teachers in understanding how pupils' basic skills can be applied and developed in different subjects and contexts.
- A significant number of pupils have arrived at the school since it acquired free school status. Leaders have not analysed assessment data closely enough to gain a clear understanding about the progress made by these pupils or their needs compared to those who have been in school for much longer.
- The development of reading is strong, especially in the primary phase. A programme of lessons to teach letters and the sounds they make (phonics), as well as specific time each day to check pupils' comprehension skills ensures that most pupils make good progress. An above-average proportion of pupils reach the higher levels by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress in reading is not as strong across the secondary phase and the early entry policy for English literature does not allow all pupils the time to attain the standards they could; some of the most able pupils underachieve as a result.
- The above-average attainment of the most able pupils is not fully capitalised upon. A lack of challenge in lessons and a target setting system that has capped ambition has resulted in too few pupils making the good or better progress needed to reach their full potential.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same inconsistent progress as their peers. While needs are identified quickly and appropriate support is planned to address their social

development as well as academic difficulties, staff do not take enough account of these when planning lessons to enable these pupils to make good progress.

- In 2014, there were very few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 and Year 11. However, these pupils typically make sound progress as they move through the school but few make the good progress needed to enable them to catch-up quickly.
- The government's additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding has not been monitored effectively for leaders to be able to provide a robust analysis of the impact of the additional support which is provided. There is no whole-school policy for tackling the persistent weaknesses in pupils' writing skills as they move into Key Stage 3.
- Leaders have ensured a strong programme of physical education and competitive sport, including through extra-curricular activities. Some pupils exhibit exceptional talent in areas such as tennis and gymnastics. The primary PE and sports funding has been used well to provide coaching to hone these abilities further.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The vast majority of children arrive in Reception with skills and abilities that are typical for their age; around one quarter arrive above what is typical. Leadership requires improvement. Leaders have not analysed childrens starting points with sufficient rigour to enable staff to focus their teaching on the groups of children and areas of learning where it is needed most. While the vast majority of children leave Reception ready for Year 1, too few exceed what is expected for their age given their starting points. Children make steady rather than good progress.
- Teaching requires improvement. Assessment has been overly cautious in the past. Leaders have ensured access to relevant training, including the opportunity to moderate assessments with other professionals, to address this issue. This has strengthened practice but staff do not always readily identify when children have demonstrated the very highest levels of development for their age. Not all children, especially those that are most able, are fully challenged to reach their full potential.
- Children make better progress during adult-led activities than during those they choose for themselves. This is because teachers spend longer thinking about what children will learn during whole-class activities than they do about other times of the day. Some activities, such as the role play area, do not offer as inviting or challenging an experience as they could. For example, there are no labels in the shop to support pupils' vocabulary development or number skills. Leaders recognise that not enough attention has yet been given to how the outdoor environment can enhance children's development across all areas of learning.
- Children form strong relationships with staff, concentrate well and cooperate effectively with each other; personal skills are already well developed when children enter the school. Children are ready and willing to learn from their first few weeks of school. This is not always capitalised upon to ensure faster progress.

The sixth form provision

is inadequate

- Leadership of the sixth form is inadequate. The monitoring of teaching and the analysis of students' achievement are weak. There is no long-term vision about how the sixth form should develop despite less than half of the Year 11 cohort staying on at the school to undertake further study. Sixth form attendance is low.
- Students do not achieve as highly as they should given their starting points due to variations in the quality of teaching that have gone unchecked by senior leaders. While attainment in 2014 compares favourably with the national average by the end of Year 13, students do not achieve what they should given their above average starting points. Recent data provided by the school shows that one quarter of students in Year 12 are not on track to achieve their predicted grade in any of their chosen subjects.
- The majority of students who failed to achieve a GCSE grade C in English and/or mathematics in Year 11 did not succeed in achieving this during their time in the sixth form. Leaders have not supported students adequately to enable them to gain the qualifications they need.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Teachers do not take full account of what students already know and understand to challenge them to reach their full potential. Students' responses to questions are not

addressed quickly enough to correct misunderstandings. Insufficient opportunity is provided for students to respond to their teachers' comments about their work to bring about faster progress. Approximately one third of students are resitting their Year 12 examinations this year to attain higher grades.

- In line with students in the rest of the school, sixth-form students do not have a good enough understanding of British values. Those students that do exhibit knowledge of such issues, such as aspects of democracy, have acquired this through their own reading or by watching the news rather than through a programme of study at school.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138567
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	455402

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	All through
School category	Free school
Age range of pupils	4–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	590
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Mole
Headteacher	Chris Gray
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2014
Telephone number	0191 534 4444
Fax number	0191 534 4111
Email address	info@grindonhall.com

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