

Gartree High School Oadby

Inspection report

Unique reference number	138155
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	395318
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Brooker HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	10–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	780
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pankaj Pancholi
Headteacher	Sonia Singleton
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
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Age group	10–14
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Needham

Additional Inspector

Philip Winch

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In total, the inspection team completed 42 lesson observations of 42 different teachers, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including pupils' work, the school's self-evaluation and analysis of performance data, and evaluated the arrangements made for safeguarding. Meetings were held with nominated staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, and evaluated the questionnaire responses from 170 parents and carers, 131 pupils and 14 staff.

Information about the school

The school draws its pupils from a wide geographical area in and beyond the town of Oadby. A significant number of pupils travel from outside the catchment area, including from Leicester, and the school is heavily over-subscribed. The majority of pupils are White British, but the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than average, most of whom are from Indian heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average, although few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national figure. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Attainment meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress expected by the government. The school accommodates the county's unit for hearing impaired pupils, a specially resourced provision for disabled pupils with special educational needs. Currently three pupils attend the Hearing Impaired Unit (HIU).

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Gartree High School is good. Inspectors acknowledge many excellent aspects of the school's provision and agree that pupils achieve exceptionally well. The school is not outstanding because there is too much variability in the quality of teaching and an insufficiently rigorous approach to self-evaluation.
- Achievement is outstanding. During their four years at the school, pupils thrive academically and develop the skills and personal qualities that prepare them very well for the next stage of their education. By the end of Year 9, standards are significantly above national figures. All groups of pupils, including pupils in the HIU and other disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, achieve exceptionally well in English and mathematics and across all areas of the curriculum.
- Teaching is good. The majority of teaching is of a high quality, including much that is outstanding, but inspection observations did not substantiate the school's view that teaching is consistently good. In a small minority of lessons seen during the inspection teaching was no better than satisfactory because of shortcomings in aspects of lesson planning, behaviour management or the use of assessment.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils' overwhelmingly positive attitudes are a key factor in their impressive progress and achievement. However, parents, carers and pupils express concerns about occasional deficiencies in behaviour, both in lessons and in pupils' interactions around the school.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads the school well and has sustained outstanding achievement by nurturing very high expectations among pupils and developing a core of excellent provision. School performance is effectively managed and improvements in teaching are well led, including for pupils in the HIU. Systematic self-evaluation underpins development planning, but leaders and managers do not scrutinise with sufficient rigour the school's

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performance or the impact of their work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good by:
 - replicating the best practice in behaviour management to eliminate any low-level disruption
 - always securing the engagement of all pupils with well-planned learning activities
 - developing strategies for assessing pupils' learning and progress in lessons and sharpening the focus of marking.

- Strengthen self-evaluation by analysing more swiftly, robustly and analytically the progress and performance of pupils and the quality of the school's provision.

Main report**Achievement of pupils**

Pupils make good progress in Year 6, often from starting points in English and mathematics that are below the levels expected for their age. At the end of this first year, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2, including in reading, writing and mathematics, is broadly in line with national figures. They make exceptional progress in Key Stage 3 to achieve standards by the end of Year 9 that are significantly above age-related expectations. Attainment and progress for all groups, including pupils from minority ethnic heritage and those who speak English as an additional language, are significantly better than those seen nationally in English and mathematics. Evidence from lesson observations confirms the views of parents and carers that, over time, pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Outstanding achievement is the result of the school's very high expectations, good teaching, excellent support and the wholly positive attitudes to learning of a very large majority of the pupils.

Central to the pupils' impressive progress is their well-developed literacy. Their skills in speaking, reading and writing are well supported across the curriculum, for example in history lessons, where they work together in groups to analyse sources of evidence, share ideas and produce extended writing. Importantly, pupils are not 'spoon fed' in lessons. Instead, they develop creativity, independence and resilience, aptitudes that prepare them very well for the next stage of their education. Attainment data from the upper school, to which the pupils transfer, indicate that Gartree pupils excel at Key Stage 4.

Progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is exceptional because of the high quality of support and guidance that they receive,

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both in lessons and in intervention groups. Excellent one-to-one provision in the HIU, guides pupils' learning but also nurtures their autonomy, so that they make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well.

Quality of teaching

Inspection evidence supports the views of parents and carers that teaching is good and much is outstanding, but also found quite wide variation in the quality of learning. Parental questionnaire responses were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching, although a few also highlighted weaknesses and mentioned disruption in specific lessons. The excellent relationships between adults and pupils are a notable feature of the school. These relationships establish a very positive climate for learning, which encourages the involvement of pupils and enables most lessons to proceed at a brisk pace. However, this is not always the case. In the weakest lessons the pace of learning is occasionally affected by low-level disruption. Although the vast majority of pupils are compliant and attentive, a few pupils disengage when lessons lack suitable challenge or direction. The best practice in behaviour management is not applied by all staff.

Most teaching is sharply focused and well managed, but the best lessons also plan interesting activities and imaginative resources that secure the active involvement of every pupil. Outstanding lessons are characterised by feverish pupil activity based on lively discussion, independent investigation and good support for all groups. In English lessons, for example, skilful exposition and excellent pair and group work enabled pupils to confidently make Olympics presentations, sensibly debate social and moral issues and create impressive poetry. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well taught. Outstanding teaching observed in the HIU skilfully used sushi to develop understanding of geographical concepts about Japan and also consolidate and extend personal skills.

Assessment is sound. Pupils know their levels and, broadly, what they need to do to improve. Marking is encouraging and some, for example in English, is detailed and constructive. However, marking does not focus sufficiently on subject criteria, so pupils are not always clear what they have done well or what they need to do next, and do not routinely respond to the advice provided. In lessons, when teachers have good strategies for assessing pupils' understanding, they are able to redirect and extend their learning. In Year 6, for example, peer assessment was skilfully used in a textiles lesson to steer improvement and the use of mini-whiteboards in mathematics enabled the teacher to quickly check pupils' work.

Lessons have clear objectives linked to subject criteria, but also seek to develop pupils' wider skills and aptitudes, including their reading, often exploring topical issues and significant moral questions. In history, for example, Year 9 pupils explored the morality of the Hiroshima bombing and, in Year 8 English, the pupils selected patients for expensive medical treatment. The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well embedded because pupils are given so many opportunities to explore and debate pertinent issues. During the inspection

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pupils were involved with the 'Race for Life' in their physical education lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' good behaviour and exceptionally positive attitudes to learning in almost all situations make a strong contribution to their high achievement. Despite some variability in behaviour, most pupils demonstrate remarkable maturity and independence. They are typically polite, considerate and hard working. The highly positive attitudes of most make daily life at school very pleasant and enjoyable. Pupils are punctual and attend well. Attendance has improved significantly over the last year and is above average. When given the opportunity, pupils conduct themselves with commendable maturity and are eager to take on responsibility. Initiatives such as GAP (Gartree Against Poverty) foster pupils' wider sense of responsibility, but also encourage and empower them to make a difference. Their conscientious approach to class work and homework reflects their own high expectations.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel completely safe and that there is rarely, if ever, any physical aggression or other types of bullying. Pupils of all ages are confident that the school takes seriously and deals effectively with any concerns that they raise. A few parents and carers commented that the school had been slow to respond to occasional incidents of bullying. Issues with behaviour tend to be linked with boisterousness in the playground or on the stairs, and occasionally with low-level disruption in a few lessons. Over time, the number of recorded incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour has reduced, and exclusions are falling.

Leadership and management

The headteacher models high aspiration and high-quality leadership. Senior and middle leaders share her ambition and have been conspicuously successful in creating a harmonious school community where pupils have equal opportunity to thrive, both academically and in their personal development, without discrimination. The school's capacity to sustain improvement is demonstrated by the year-on-year increases in the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes, including attendance, standards and achievement.

The school works well with parents and carers, and is always seeking ways to improve home-school communication. Despite some criticisms, most parents and carers are wholly positive about the school and have no hesitation recommending it. They are particularly affirmative about the quality of support and guidance, about the wider opportunities for enrichment and the way that pupils develop self-confidence and independence. One parental response summed up the positive comments in many others: 'Gartree is a nurturing environment where children are praised, rewarded and their individual efforts acknowledged and celebrated. Enrichment activities and the transition programme have been outstanding, as has home-school communication.' The promotion of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is a notable strength.

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The curriculum is well matched to pupils' academic needs and offers an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities that provide ample opportunities for social, cultural and personal enrichment. Pupils enthuse about the memorable experiences of their 'enrichment weeks'. Importantly, the school works hard to ensure equal access and opportunity for all. For example, the participation of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is closely monitored so that they can be guided towards enrichment opportunities that they might otherwise miss. The HIU is well led and managed so that its pupils can take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the school.

Well-established procedures are applied to monitor provision and review performance. The school has a systematic approach to monitoring teaching, underpinned by a programme of whole-school training and carefully structured continuing professional development and targeted coaching and support. The quality of teaching is improving year on year. However, some judgements on teaching tend to be generous because evaluations focus more on teaching than the quality of pupils' learning. The governing body is astute in holding the school to account and sufficiently well informed to play a strategic role in the school's development. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gartree High School, Oadby, LE2 5TQ

Thank you for making such a positive contribution to our recent inspection. Gartree is a lovely school to inspect because you are so welcoming and engage sensibly with visitors. Your views, alongside the survey responses from your parents and carers, confirmed the school's strengths and also highlighted areas for improvement. We judge its overall effectiveness to be good, and were most impressed by:

- the high quality of much of your teaching
- the outstanding progress that you make, not only in English and mathematics, but also in practical subjects such as physical education, art and design
- the exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes to learning that most of you demonstrate in every lesson
- the personal qualities that you develop, such as resilience and independence, that prepare you so well for the next stage of your education and later life.

Notwithstanding these obvious strengths, we consider that teaching and monitoring by leaders and managers should be strengthened if the school is to be outstanding. We also judge that the behaviour of a few of you should be better. Some lessons are not challenging enough, and this is occasionally linked with disruption from a small number of pupils. Although the vast majority of you behave exceptionally well, some of you do not show enough thought or consideration for others. We have asked your school to:

- ensure that teaching, assessment and marking are consistently good so that low-level disruption is eliminated
- strengthen its self-evaluation so that improvements can be made quickly.

You have a key role in securing your own success because your good attendance, positive attitudes and hard work underpin your progress and achievement. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector

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