

Garston Manor School

Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford, WD25 7HR

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and every pupil leaves school at the end of Year 11 with externally recognised qualifications.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons because teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Any pupil who falls behind is promptly spotted and supported.
- There is a strong family feeling throughout the school. Staff know pupils as individuals and help them to manage their behaviour well.
- Pupils feel safe in school and many know how to keep themselves safe. They are polite and thoughtful, and say that they like their teachers. They relish the activities that the school provides for them.
- Leaders and managers keep a careful check on the progress of each pupil and on teachers' work. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the rate of achievement of all its pupils and the quality of teaching.
- The governing body is knowledgeable and asks the school challenging questions about pupils' achievement and teachers' work.
- Links with other schools through sports and games boost pupils' confidence. A wide selection of visits and activities outside school extend classroom learning and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough excellent teaching to enable pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Teachers do not help pupils to develop their reading skills by spending enough time on teaching them about sounds and letters.
- Routines in the newly established nurture group are not yet well established.
- Pupils do not always feel safe on school transport.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors spent almost eight hours observing 15 lessons, taken by 14 teachers in school and the local college. Six of them were joint observations with the headteacher and a member of the senior management team. Additionally, lessons were visited to check how well all pupils were involved, and some pupils were heard reading.
- The inspectors observed a range of sessions where pupils were supported individually or in small groups for reading and work on sounds and letters (phonics), including in the nurture group, and the 'blue room' for pupils who had been withdrawn from lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 17 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including records relating to monitoring and self-evaluation, behaviour, safety, safeguarding and attendance. Records of pupils' progress were examined and a work scrutiny was carried out with the headteacher to assess progress.

Inspection team

Kathy Hooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school population has changed. In addition to pupils with moderate learning difficulties, the school provides for pupils whose main needs relate to autism, or speech, language and communication difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The changing needs of pupils has led to the establishment of a nurture group for Year 7 pupils with complex needs, and a withdrawal room for those temporarily unable to cope in their own classroom.
- Since 2011, the school has run a pilot post-16 transition unit for two students, but this will cease at the end of this academic year.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority, for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium), is well above average.
- Although the majority of pupils are White British, the proportions from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are higher than average.
- The school is a 'hub school' for sports and places heavy emphasis on outdoor education.
- The school is due to be re-built in the next academic year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend pupils' literacy skills by ensuring that they have daily opportunities to learn about sounds and letters and to practise their reading.
- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - including activities that encourage pupils of all abilities to do things for themselves, using objects and pictures they can see, and things they can handle and explore
 - relating pupils' learning to real-life situations
 - making better use of the interactive whiteboard and computers
 - using a wider range of ways to record the small gains in pupils' learning
 - ensuring that in their day-to-day checks on teachers' work, leaders concentrate specifically on the points above.
- Develop clear and consistent routines and hands-on activities in the nurture group by:
 - researching and making use of the best practice found in nurture groups in other schools
 - using the same team of staff to build strong relationships with pupils.
- Continue to request from the local authority a way of ensuring improved behaviour management by bus escorts.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement throughout the school is improving strongly because teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' starting points and match learning to their different abilities and needs. As a result, pupils all make at least the expected amount of progress and many make good progress.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is not English make good progress. Consistent routines help pupils with difficulties related to autism to make good progress and well-focused speech and language support helps those experiencing difficulties. Overall, there is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
- The additional funding (the pupil premium) that is provided for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is used well to support learning. These pupils receive one-to-one support to fill the gaps in their learning in literacy and numeracy, and some of them receive counselling for their social and emotional needs. As a result, they make similar progress to their classmates.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in Years 7 to 9 and all pupils leave at the end of Year 11 with at least one Entry Level qualification, and two-thirds leave with at least one GCSE pass.
- Pupils make best progress in information and communication technology because work is very finely tuned to their individual needs. The 'can do' approach used in these lessons boosts their confidence as they recognise their increasing competence. Pupils make outstanding progress in literacy when they are involved in exciting, memorable learning, as in college projects.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy are reinforced well in lessons. For example, selected pupils read the instructions to the class when preparing an experiment in science. Pupils' understanding of specialist words is well supported because teachers check their understanding.
- Pupils develop their understanding of sounds and letters (phonics) and reading through individual and small group work. These sessions do not take place often enough, however, particularly for pupils with more complex speech and language needs, to make the necessary rapid progress.
- The achievement of a few Year 7 pupils with complex needs in the nurture group requires improvement. The routines and activities are not yet sufficiently well-established to ensure they make the same good progress as the rest of the pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers make good use of information related to pupils' individual special educational needs and their levels in reading, to plan their lessons. They sequence tasks well to maintain pupils' interest, and check their learning to make sure they understand.
- Teachers get pupils to take responsibility for their learning when they ask them to check their own work and that of others against pointers for success. Their marking encourages pupils to respond and improve their work.
- In outstanding lessons, learning is skilfully and precisely planned to match and extend each

individual, as in information and communication technology lessons. Activities that encourage pupils to do interesting things for themselves, often using technological gadgets such as cameras and computers, result in pupils making the best progress. Pupils in Year 10 became deeply involved in making their own 'zombie film' with college staff and wrote their own story using a giant storyboard.

- Teachers question pupils well, wording their questions appropriately for pupils of different abilities. In this way, pupils' understanding is expanded and teachers are able to check their learning.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and this enables learning to proceed at a good pace. Teachers make good use of signs and symbols to support communication in lessons. Other adults who support in the classroom are well briefed by teachers and work very productively with individuals and small groups.
- As a result of concerns raised by parents and carers, the nature of homework has been revised this term to make the tasks more flexible. It is written into pupils' diaries to make sure it is correctly communicated to parents and carers. Where it is completed, homework extends pupils' learning.
- Although teachers plan tasks to meet differing needs, pupils make less progress in some lessons where there are fewer opportunities to do things such as handle and manipulate objects. For example, in mathematics, resources such as linking plastic blocks are not always readily available to help pupils work out their sums. In these lessons, teachers use more worksheets. This reduces opportunities for pupils to develop their independence because they have to rely too much on adult support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There is a positive and supportive atmosphere at all levels throughout the school. Pupils with differing needs, abilities and cultures work cooperatively and harmoniously on a range of tasks. They persevere well in lessons and recognise the need to work hard.
- In mathematics, some Year 7 pupils were quite competitive about their progress as they completed a series of exercises, and Year 11 pupils knew what they needed to do to reach higher levels. Pupils recognise their responsibility for younger ones. The most able understand that some pupils' inappropriate behaviour is due to the nature of their special educational needs rather than deliberate disobedience.
- The introduction of the 'blue room' has been very successful in improving behaviour. Pupils who spend time there are sensitively counselled to establish what is preventing them from learning, and given practical ideas to help them and their teachers to deal with their difficulties.
- The inspectors saw no hints of bullying and the school's monitoring shows clear improvements in behaviour generally. Pupils and their parents and carers say that pupils feel very safe in school. On a few occasions, they feel less safe when there is boisterous behaviour on school transport.
- Instances of racism are rare and promptly addressed. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. The 'resilience project' helps pupils to consider options in unexpected situations. All pupils have good opportunities to talk to an adult about issues that concern them.

- Pupils have well-developed social skills because they have many opportunities to work collaboratively with others, especially through sporting activities. The students who were part of the post-16 pilot have developed into confident and mature young people.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is broadly average. This is due to better checks on attendance by the governing body and prompt action by the school. It also reflects pupils' increased enjoyment of school.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders and managers have been determined and rigorous in raising standards throughout the school. They make sure that every pupil has the best opportunity to succeed. There are good relationships at all levels and staff try to ensure every pupil is treated fairly. The local authority has supported the school well in its drive for improvement, checking the accuracy of school judgements on teaching, and giving advice and support to teachers.
- The headteacher shares information about the school's performance and pupils' progress with all the staff so that they are clear about the school's effectiveness and their part in it. Senior leaders check teachers' work thoroughly and when observing lessons, they make clear to teachers what has worked well and what needs to be improved. This has helped to bring about improvements in teaching.
- There are clear links between pupils' progress, teachers' targets and whole school priorities. The school improvement plan is accurate and well focused. The headteacher and governing body make the right decisions regarding teachers' movements up the salary scale. Teachers who lead subjects make a good contribution to improved teaching. Safeguarding fully meets requirements and it is strong throughout the school because staff are well trained and knowledgeable.
- The programme of learning for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is broad and extended to promote pupils' independence. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good opportunities to gain academic qualifications in school and vocational qualifications through strong links with local colleges. Pupils and their parents and carers are well supported to make informed decisions at the end of Year 11.
- Opportunities for pupils to live together for a week and take part in exciting outdoor activities in Year 7 and again in Year 11 are popular and immensely valuable for pupils, encouraging them to test themselves in supportive situations. These activities and many opportunities for horticultural, artistic and musical activities, school visits and performances, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Strong links with other schools, including international partnerships, benefit both staff and pupils. There are opportunities for pupils and teachers to spend some of their time in mainstream schools, and Garston Manor provides support to other schools regarding resources and shared training. Links such as those with Watford Disability Football team and Watford Community Gardens make pupils aware of the local community. Links with Niger provide pupils with a view of life in a different country.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - As a result of changed membership of the governing body, there has been an increase in the amount of training for staff and governors, and in the involvement of parents and carers. Governors are well involved in decision making in the school such as that relating to the entitlement for pupils from 14 to 19. The governing body has a good understanding of data

and of the school's strengths and weaknesses, based on pupils' achievement in relation to other schools in the authority and nationally. Governors challenge the staff well, but supportively, and are aware of teachers' performance and how decisions about pay are reached. Appropriate decisions are made regarding the budget, including the use and impact of the additional pupil premium income. As a result, the governing body is able to convincingly hold the school to account for any differences in pupils' progress. The school has a good capacity to improve.

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	117667
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401677

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Singh
Headteacher	Julie Lowman
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2009
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