

Greenbank School

Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 1LD

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Greenbank is a remarkably happy school where students feel exceptionally well cared for and supported in a calm and purposeful environment.
- Students' achievement is outstanding and improving year on year. Students make rapid progress in all subjects and in their personal development, usually from low starting points.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. The headteacher and his leadership team have very high expectations and a 'go4it' approach, which is shared by all staff.
- Teachers plan exceptionally well for the different groups of students but do not always make it clear what each student is expected to have achieved by the end of a lesson.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students are thoughtful and respectful of each other, staff and visitors. They develop excellent social and moral attitudes.
- Senior leaders and managers have settled into their new roles quickly. The headteacher has tightened the school's procedures and systems, resulting in improvement in all aspects of the school's work.
- The curriculum is exciting and provides memorable experiences. Senior leaders constantly review the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs and interests of the changing student population.
- The sixth form is outstanding and has continued to grow and develop since the previous inspection. There are increased opportunities for students to achieve external awards which match their ability and prepare them extremely well for their future lives.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Provision and management of residential care are not judged to be outstanding because recent changes in staff mean that a few care staff, including the head of care, have not yet obtained a qualification at an appropriate level. Staff who have worked at the school for a long time have not been subject to the current checks which would be considered best practice.

Information about this inspection

- This was an integrated inspection of the school and residential provision.
- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, five of which were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, with groups of students, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the school’s improvement consultant.
- Social care inspectors met with care managers, the business manager and members of the care staff. They spent time with students in residence in the early morning and evening and had lunch with them in school.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including care plans, behaviour logs, pupil progress data, improvement planning, training and safeguarding documents.
- The inspectors took account of 17 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school’s own analysis of parent, pupil and staff surveys they have carried out in the last year. Forty members of staff completed the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Carruthers

Additional Inspector

Elaine Clare

Social Care Inspector

Denise Jolly

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Greenbank School provides for students who have statements of special educational needs. The large majority of students have autism spectrum conditions and the proportion of these students has increased since the previous inspection. A smaller number of, mainly older, students have moderate learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties. Some students have combinations of special educational needs.
- The school provides for students from across Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East.
- The proportion of students eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is below average. In this school pupil premium is additional government funding for those students who are entitled to free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority.
- The very large majority of students are boys. Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The school offers residential provision for students during term time, ranging from occasional stays, some staying one or two nights per week and with only one student in residence for four nights a week on a regular basis.
- Greenbank School shares a campus with a number of other primary, secondary and special schools, a children's centre and a further education college. The school uses alternative provision at Mid-Cheshire College, Reaseheath College and St Nicholas RC High School.
- There have been significant changes to the leadership of both the school and the residential provision since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of student progress even further by more precisely identifying what individual students are expected to learn in each lesson and sharing this with them.
- Improve the residential provision further by:
 - ensuring the residential care manager gains a relevant childcare qualification
 - increasing the rate of progress towards all care staff gaining a relevant qualification in caring for children and young people
 - ensuring all care staff have an enhanced criminal record check.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Almost all students start at the school with attainments which are below and for half of the students, well below those typically expected for their age.
- Students quickly settle into the school. The excellent understanding of the needs of the different groups of students helps to build their self-esteem and confidence, so that all individuals make great strides in learning to manage their own difficulties and quickly adapt to the structure of the school day.
- Since the previous inspection, rates of progress have significantly increased, particularly in students' reading ability. Attainments in mathematics and writing are rising steadily. Reading is often better than comprehension because of the nature of students' special educational needs but staff are skilled in supporting and extending understanding.
- Students make outstanding progress because staff have high expectations for what they can achieve. They are provided with challenging but practical work which interests them and motivates them to want to learn. Students particularly enjoy art and design technology lessons and produce some amazing pieces of craft work. They painstakingly put together video animations of plasticine figures into stories they invent.
- Students make exceptional progress in their personal and social development and in their communication skills. Many students use visual forms of communication and are supported to make their needs and wishes known through consistent use of symbols and visual schedules.
- The school has taken careful steps to monitor the progress of all groups of students. Every student is treated as an individual. Those who are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium, and the small number of girls, do at least as well and sometimes better than others.
- An increasing number of students are attending the neighbouring high school, with support from Greenbank staff, to work towards higher level qualifications in some subjects.
- The sixth form students' achievement is outstanding. They are offered a broad range of accreditation opportunities so that each student can leave the school with awards which reflect their individual ability and interests. Students spend time at local colleges where they are able to sample subjects such as hair and beauty, construction, horticulture and animal welfare.
- All students are offered a work experience placement matched to their interests. For a few students this may be an internal placement in the school.
- Students gain confidence in their own ability through mini-enterprise projects. Sixth form students have recently won a prestigious Young Enterprise Award and enjoyed showing their hugely enjoyable and original presentation to other students and staff at an assembly.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding across all subjects and in all year groups.
- Teachers provide lessons which are practical and fun and with plenty of visual support to aid learning. For example, in a lesson about Victorian childhood, students were able to understand the huge weights of coal young children had to pull in the mines, when the teacher piled more and more objects into a wagon.
- All lessons incorporate aspects of literacy and numeracy where possible. For instance in the lesson described above, students weighed the objects and added them up.
- Whole class teaching is usually kept to a minimum to remind students of prior learning and to teach new concepts. Students are then quickly expected to move to individual or paired work which is well matched to their abilities and ensures they move on quickly. Teachers always make clear what the intended learning is for the class, but sometimes this could be made clearer for

individual students so that they know exactly what each of them is expected to achieve by the end of the lesson.

- Teachers find imaginative ways to filter aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through all lessons, so that students' development in these areas is exceptional.
- Questioning is used highly effectively to encourage students to express their ideas and to check on their understanding. Verbal feedback during lessons ensures that students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in knowing when to provide support and when to wait and give students' time to work things out for themselves. As a result, students develop high levels of independence.
- Resources, including use of video, information and communication technology (ICT), symbols and picture timelines provide consistent support to reassure students about what they are to do in familiar routines.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students told inspectors that they enjoy their lessons and feel safe and secure in school. This is reflected in their excellent attitudes to learning and exemplary behaviour in lessons.
- When students experience occasional difficulties and become anxious, they are managed and supported firmly and kindly, so that behaviour does not disrupt the learning of others and they are quickly able to re-join the class. Positive behaviour management strategies are used consistently and highly effectively so that physical restraints are extremely rare. There have been no exclusions in the last year.
- Behaviour logs are now being kept rigorously and analysis of incidents is informing individual's support plans and classroom strategies.
- Students are very supportive of each other. During a physical education lesson, a student who had some physical difficulty throwing a ball accurately was told how well he was doing by another, which gave him the confidence to try again.
- Students are polite and courteous. Considering the nature of their learning difficulties and disabilities, they develop impressive social and moral skills through times in the day such as snack, assemblies and in personal, social education lessons.
- Students are very well informed about how to keep themselves safe. They participate in anti-bullying weeks and learn about the dangers of smoking, drug abuse and unsafe internet use.
- High quality relationships with staff are an important factor in helping students to behave well. Students in school and residence are extremely confident that any concerns can be shared with an adult and will be managed with confidence and respect. In the school's own survey, 100% of parents stated that they believe their children are safe.
- The strong links between education and residential staff ensure that behaviour support plans are shared across both settings. There are high quality handovers at the beginning and end of each day to share information about students' well-being.
- Students attend well because they want to come to school. As a result, attendance levels are high.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Almost all of the senior leaders and managers in both school and residence are either new in post or have different roles and responsibility from the previous inspection. The headteacher and his team are totally committed to driving up standards. Aspirations have been raised and are shared with all staff and members of the governing body. The 'go4it' ethos means staff and students are encouraged to try new things and to believe that everything is possible. As a result,

there is an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

- Frequent monitoring of teaching and learning has raised the quality of teaching to outstanding overall and any underperformance is met with clear actions for improvement.
- A comprehensive performance management programme is in place and all staff have targets to contribute to school improvement and to take on additional responsibilities as they move up the pay scales.
- Leaders and managers ensure that English, mathematics and personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education are given the highest priority. However, they have also given a lot of time and thought to developing a curriculum which captures students’ interest and engagement. The curriculum is constantly reviewed to ensure it meets changing needs and presents ambitious and challenging opportunities, often in partnership with other providers with whom the school has strong partnerships.
- Accommodation in the school has been thoughtfully refurbished to better meet the needs of the increasing number of students with autism and to provide a welcoming and calm environment. Links with speech and language therapists have been particularly helpful in developing the excellent communication systems which are integral to each classroom and to shared areas.
- The local authority provides light touch support to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved hugely since the previous inspection. Governors have attended training and requested presentations from staff to better inform themselves about the provision and how it is monitored. They ensure safeguarding is securely in place, check on the spending and impact of the pupil premium and scrutinise data about student progress. They feel confident to ask challenging questions. Governors engage in learning walks in school and monitor the care and extended curriculum provided in residence. They ensure that the performance management of staff is well linked to school improvement planning and pay progression.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is good
Residential pupils’ safety	is outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is good

- Greenbank School residential provision is a good service which promotes each individual child’s strengths and abilities and where students thrive in a warm, caring, nurturing environment.
- The commitment and dedication of the staff to ensuring students achieve to their full potential are excellent. The residential experience clearly enables students to make outstanding social, emotional, cultural and educational progress.
- The school offers an outstanding choice of activities and events which meet the needs of students and enable them to experience and acquire new knowledge, skills and interests. Trips off-site support the development of students’ social skills and independence. Students are valued as individuals and staff have high, realistic aspirations for them. Innovative ideas, such as accessible multi-sports enhance students’ confidence, self-esteem and independence.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding, lying at the heart of the residential provision. It reflects a clear understanding of the varied and complex needs of individual students.
- Shared information across the school and residential site ensures students are supported extremely effectively. Residential staff liaise exceptionally well with education staff to provide support for students to achieve qualifications and awards.
- Partnerships with parents are excellent. Parents are encouraged to visit the residence and two-

way communication keeps parents exceptionally well informed about their child's progress and well-being. External professionals and agencies are involved to support students where appropriate.

- A clear procedure is in place for students and their parents to voice concerns or complaints and these are addressed appropriately.
- The school values the individual and diverse identities of students and their unique qualities are celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding. Students' care and educational experiences are underpinned by the school's clearly expressed philosophy and values upheld by the strong management team.
- The headteacher and head of care work closely together to ensure high quality care in both settings. Although the care manager has obtained a management qualification, she has not yet obtained a childcare qualification at an appropriate level.
- Good progress has been made since the previous inspection to ensure all residential care workers gain an appropriate qualification in caring for children and young people. This goal has not yet been achieved by all care staff, though practice is excellent. A few staff who have worked in residence for many years have had relevant checks but have not been subject to an enhanced criminal record check. While not a requirement, this is considered to be best practice.
- However, these suggested improvements do not affect the day-to-day practice in the residential provision where the safety and well-being of students are of paramount importance and there are clear, detailed procedures for safeguarding their welfare and promoting their good health.

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>

Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	111503
Social care unique reference number	SC006624
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	401188

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	26
Number of boarders on roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Hyde
Headteacher	Mike McCann
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2009
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