



Glenthorne High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103002
Local Authority Sutton
Inspection number 286546
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Chisnall HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Sutton Common Road
School category	Community		Sutton
Age range of pupils	11–19		SM3 9PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8644 6307
Number on roll (school)	1210	Fax number	020 8641 8725
Number on roll (6th form)	153		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Simon Brown
		Headteacher	Mr Stephen Hume
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	14–15 November 2006	286546

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Glenthorne is a larger than average school with a specialism in performing arts. When pupils are admitted to Year 7, their attainment is a little below average although the full range of ability is present. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just below average. The school has identified a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. About one in eight pupils has a minority ethnic heritage, although no one group predominates. The school is a designated training school, leading local provision for initial teacher training and specialising in professional development for staff.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Glenthorne's improvement from the last inspection is a success story. It now provides a good overall education and extremely good in the main school. The sixth form is beginning to show similar improvement. The key to this significant improvement lies in the leadership of the school. This, with concerted effort from all staff, has been very effective in improving behaviour so that pupils are more than ready to learn and enjoy coming to school. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers are strict but in a good way'. As a result of this, standards have been rising at a much faster rate than nationally and are now above average and pupils' achievements at Key Stages 3 and 4 are outstanding.

Although pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes are important factors in bringing about these gains in learning, they are not the only ones. The school has successfully improved teaching so that it is consistently good across the school, including the sixth form. The curriculum offered to pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is impressive. It meets their needs and interests very well indeed and is significantly enriched through after school activities, study support and excellence in the performing arts. High academic achievement is only part of the picture of success. The school is also very effective in helping to develop pupils and students as confident young citizens with good potential to do well in the next stages in their education and the world of work. Through such opportunities as the school council, work experience, sports co-ordinators and charitable fund-raising, pupils are able to make an excellent contribution to the school community and beyond.

This is a school that knows its strengths and weaknesses very well indeed. The first-rate governing body has a perceptive knowledge of the important issues facing the school, such as extending the specialisms offered by it. Senior and middle managers judge how well the school is doing very accurately indeed and draw up effective plans for improvement. One of the most important things they do is to check the quality of teaching regularly, helping to promote good practice. These lesson observations need to be more sharply focused on what pupils and students are learning so that more lessons can be brought up to the level of the best in the school.

The school has demonstrated a very successful track record of improvement, taking good note of the opinions of pupils and parents. There is excellent capacity for continued development.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school's sixth form is satisfactory. Students are very positive about the sixth form and confirm that they feel well cared for and supported by staff, despite cramped accommodation. However, school leaders recognise that provision is not as good as elsewhere in the school and are undertaking a range of actions to improve this aspect of the school's work. While these changes have already had a positive effect, they have not yet had a full impact on examination results, although these are improving.

A particular focus for improvement has been the quality of sixth form lessons. This work has clearly had an impact and teaching and learning are now consistently good. However, lessons are often based on long inputs from the teacher with less opportunity for students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The school also recognises the need to continue to develop the sixth form curriculum to ensure that it fully meets the needs and aspirations of all students.

The leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory but improving. There is a very clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses and a good capacity to make the necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise sixth form achievement through helping students to learn more effectively
- Improve lesson monitoring so that there is a sharper focus on the subject content and how well pupils and students are learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards are improving rapidly over time and are now above average in the main school and average in the sixth form. Starting from slightly below average attainment, pupils make rapid progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and their achievements are outstanding. Students' achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory but improving. These results have been brought about by concerted whole school efforts to improve pupils' learning and to provide a curriculum that meets their needs very well indeed. The same attention is being given to students' learning in the sixth form and is beginning to bear fruit.

No groups of pupils or students underachieve. Indeed, those with learning difficulties or disabilities make excellent progress and achieve highly. Although girls attain higher standards than boys overall, boys are making good progress from lower starting points. Standards in the performing arts subjects are high and the school deserves its reputation in this area. Standards in English and mathematics are also high. The school meets or exceeds the challenging targets it sets itself in Key Stages 3 and 4.

In the sixth form, standards are rising, as are pass rates for AS and A2 levels but there is too much variation between subjects and students are not making progress at the same rate as elsewhere in the school. This is because their independent learning skills are not yet sufficiently developed. Nevertheless, they are improving as a result of targeted support for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They understand the difference between right and wrong and have a clear understanding of the consequences of misbehaviour. As a result, moral development is good and pupils conduct themselves extremely well. Their behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection and is a major factor in helping them to achieve highly. Attendance is satisfactory but improving and pupils enjoy coming to school.

Pupils enjoy the range of opportunities offered both in and out of school, particularly in sport and performing arts. Through these they develop a cultural and social awareness, using skills which will help them to embark upon the world of work with increased confidence.

The school council and sixth form representation at governors' meetings have had an extremely positive impact, allowing pupils to demonstrate that they are able to make a very good contribution to their community. Spiritual development is good. Assemblies celebrate achievement and encourage pupils to think about others. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for a safe and healthy lifestyle. They are not always consistent in their practice of making healthy food choices but are aware of the steps that the school is taking to support and encourage them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good in the main school and in the sixth form. There is a little teaching that is less than good and some that is outstanding. Some of the best teaching is in the performing arts subjects, but not exclusively so.

Lessons are planned well and staff ensure that they identify what it is pupils and students are to learn. This helps pupils and students to see how much progress they are making. Staff have good subject knowledge and are able to explain things very clearly. They also know their pupils well, making good use of assessment knowledge to pitch lessons at the right level of challenge. A good example of this was seen in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where the most able pupils were set different homework that required a higher level of thinking about algebraic equations. These strengths, and the very good relationships between adults and pupils, help pupils to learn effectively and make good and outstanding progress.

One feature that is not as strong and holding back some lessons from being of the highest quality is that relating to pupil and student participation. Too often, they are

asked to work individually without capitalising on opportunities to collaborate and share ideas with each other. When this does happen, for example in a Year 7 English lesson where pupils shared how to retrieve information from different sources, new learning is secured very effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is good overall. In the sixth form it is satisfactory but elsewhere there is a first class curriculum with an extremely wide choice of academic and vocational courses. Pupils say, 'We are motivated to do well because we can take the courses that suit us'. Some are spurred on by the opportunity to take their some examinations earlier than normal which promotes high achievement. Others greatly benefit from the very popular enrichment classes, taught outside school hours, which increase their examination options or deepen learning. The very popular and wide ranging clubs buzz with activity and enjoyment. The school's performing arts status is reflected in the high numbers who learn a musical instrument or participate in extremely successful sports teams and top quality drama, dance and musical productions. An effective personal, social, health and citizenship programme has a good impact on broadening pupils' personal understanding and learning.

While there is a good range of advanced level courses in the sixth form, there is only a limited range of other courses. The construction of the sixth form timetable means that some students find it difficult to choose a mixture of courses that is absolutely right for them. The small size of the sixth form is clearly a factor here and the school is now collaborating with other local schools and colleges to help ease these problems.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, support and guidance for pupils and students are good. Targeted support for pupils, including the most vulnerable, ensures that specific and very effective programmes of teaching and support are in place. Heads of year play a significant role in monitoring pupils' progress as well as their effort and behaviour. In this way, pupils' achievements are well tracked and supported.

Links with parents are strong. There is regular communication from the school and opportunities for parents to be involved in reviewing their child's progress are provided throughout the year. Guidance for older students is carefully planned so that they receive good advice about future career and further study options. The way in which the school sets targets for sixth form students and monitors their progress has improved recently. However, practice is not consistent and information is not yet being used fully to raise the achievement of students still further.

The school deals well with health and safety issues. Good procedures for assessing risks are in place and child protection procedures are well established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 3

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. This is because he has a relentless focus on improving the school and has successfully created an environment where the achievement of every pupil and student is important to staff. The impact of this is in the rapid improvements in pupils' achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4. The same rigour is being applied to sixth form provision and results are beginning to show but not yet at the same rate as elsewhere in the school.

Senior and middle leaders are very effective in managing improvements at subject level. Through accurate self-evaluation, including analysis of information relating to pupil progress, they create plans for improvement that are well focused on the right things to do to raise standards still further. Lessons are monitored systematically and teachers receive feedback on how to make lessons better still for pupils and students. However, these are too general and not enough attention is paid to how well pupils and students are learning particular subject skills and knowledge. Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory but getting better as the results of improvement actions begin to be seen. Professional development for staff is effective as it has made a major contribution to management skills and teaching practice.

Governance is first-rate. The governing body has excellent knowledge of how well the school is doing, listening well to staff, parents and especially students. It holds the school to account very effectively and, together with relevant staff, manages the school's finances rigorously. Despite costs per pupil that are above average, the school offers good value for money because of the high achievements of pupils in the main school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with many of you and are grateful for the way in which you shared your thoughts with us. In return, I want to tell you about the inspection findings.

We think that you go to a good school that is getting better all the time. You are receiving a very good education in the main school and in the sixth form, one that is improving but could be better still. Let me explain what is making this happen:

- Your behaviour is excellent. We were very impressed by the way that you conduct yourselves in class and around the school. You are growing into confident and responsible citizens with positive attitudes to school and life in general.
- You are taught well. Your teachers know their subjects thoroughly and provide lessons that make you think. They get on well with you and know how you are doing. We have asked your teachers to help those of you in the sixth form to develop your independent learning skills so that you can make even better progress. Perhaps you can share your ideas for what would help you to learn best.
- You have an excellent headteacher who, along with the staff, knows the school very well and makes very good plans to improve it still further. Many of the staff visit your lessons to help make them even better. We have suggested that they should look more closely at what you are learning in each subject so that they can come up with good ideas as to how your progress can be faster still.
- There are excellent opportunities for those of you in the main school to follow your interests and special talents, particularly those relating to the performing arts. You make the most of these and you told us how much you enjoy these and other activities.

All of these help you to make excellent progress in the main school and reach standards in your test and exams that are better than most schools. You are rightly proud of your school and we feel it deserves the good reputation it has.

Yours sincerely

Michael Chisnall
Her Majesty's Inspector