



Greenbank Residential School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111503
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 288977
Inspection dates 11–12 September 2006
Reporting inspector John Atkinson

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Greenbank Lane
School category	Community special		Hartford, Northwich
Age range of pupils	6–18		Cheshire CW8 1LD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01606 781072
Number on roll (school)	93	Fax number	01606 783736
Number on roll (6th form)	22		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Mary Hyde
		Headteacher	Ms Chris Newall
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
6–18	11–12 September 2006	288977

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Greenbank School is a day and residential community special school. There is a wide range of special educational needs including moderate and severe learning difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The provision for ASD pupils has been enhanced and new purpose built accommodation was opened in 2006. In recent years, the school has gained the Careers Mark, the Sports Mark, a Young Enterprise Award and Cheshire Healthy Schools Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school and accurate with its self-evaluation. The school gives good value for money. The leaders have a good understanding of its strengths and priorities for improvement. They take decisive actions, such as appointing a new head and deputy of care, resulting in positive changes in the residential provision. However, there is room for further improvements, particularly in giving boarders more independence and choice, for example, in completing the refurbishment of the bedrooms. Pupils achieve well and enjoy going to school because they follow an interesting curriculum and a wide range of additional opportunities after school. The majority of pupils enter school with well below average levels of knowledge and limited personal skills. All pupils, regardless of their learning difficulties, make good progress in English, mathematics and science, resulting in vastly improved communication skills and higher levels of self-esteem. By the time they leave school, sixth form students achieve well in accredited courses, participating successfully in work-related experiences. They are very well prepared for future college courses that will further develop their economic well-being.

Teaching is good, particularly in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Science teaching provides excellent opportunities for pupils to carry out practical experiments, develop thinking skills and contribute ideas about why things happen. Teachers and teaching assistants have excellent relationships with pupils and students. They help create a very friendly and supportive school and one that pupils are keen to attend. This leads to pupils and students feeling safe and secure and willing to tackle new challenges with greater confidence and increased independence. Teachers employ a combination of highly structured routines and innovative approaches to learning that meet the needs of pupils with challenging behaviour and complex needs. As a result, these pupils are more positive in their interactions with others and in their attitude towards learning. Teachers set pupils targets to challenge them to improve. In the main this is successful, although pointers for improvement from the marking of pupils' work are not clear enough.

The curriculum is extended with an array of sporting and cultural events that inspire pupils to become involved in, and contribute to, community activities; it is a key factor in the outstanding attendance. These activities effectively help pupils to make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and wider development and adopt a distinctly healthy lifestyle. The local community facilities and those further afield are used well by the school in promoting younger pupils' growing understanding of economic awareness. The oldest pupils and those in the sixth form make very good progress in developing the personal skills they need to help them cope with life beyond school. They are developing into mature young people who are very aware of their responsibilities. As one student said, 'in the sixth form you must set an example for the younger pupils.' Staff know pupils very well because there is clear and effective communication at all levels in both the school and residential setting. The school is a safe and caring one in which parents have total confidence and where pupils say they feel valued.

The leadership of the school is sharply focused on ensuring that the educational and residential provision adequately meets the increasingly diverse needs of pupils and enables them to make good progress academically and personally. Effective planning by the governing body and the headteacher has led to improved provision for ASD pupils through better resources and new accommodation. This has improved their communication skills and increased opportunities for more social interaction. There is a very high level of involvement for all pupils who take full advantage of the many opportunities made available to them in the community, local schools and colleges. The school has made a significant number of new teaching and care appointments in recent years and successfully established an enthusiastic, committed and innovative team. This has created a positive ethos that motivates the pupils to work hard. Staff actively seek further training so they are better equipped to meet the increasingly diverse needs of pupils. However, subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and improving their subjects and do not have a strong grasp of the tracking of pupils' progress. The capacity to improve is good and there is a real sense of passion and desire amongst the staff team to take the school forward.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provision is good. The curriculum is enterprising and varied because of the range of highly relevant courses that are available to meet the individual needs of students. Students are given good guidance and support in completing their accredited courses and in developing the skills necessary to access future college places, work experience and employment opportunities. Students in the sixth form confirm this guidance has helped them to think about what they will do when they leave. As one pupil said, 'I'm proud of what I have done in school and feel a little bit scared about leaving and going to college but I know there is someone there to talk to.' Teaching is good and the relationships between adults and students are excellent and these are very influential in promoting a mature and ambitious response from students who grow in confidence and self-esteem as a result. Leadership and management are good and ensure that students are achieving well in their courses and in their personal development.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 8

The last inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in November 2005 shows satisfactory improvement from the previous report. It recognises that almost all of the National Minimum Standards are satisfactorily met. Since then, the school has given good attention to implementing each of the recommendations but there is still room for further improvement. Although opportunities for pupils to be more independent are not as effective as they should be, the new care team is focused on involving the boarders more in decision making and in improving the standard of accommodation, establishing a more homely living environment. This work needs time

to come to fruition. The procedures for handover at the beginning and end of the day are effective in communicating to staff any difficulties or successes that may affect pupils' attitudes, either to their work in the school or to the way they behave in the residence. Good relationships with care staff ensure that pupils are well cared for, are happy and that the residential provision is consolidating the work that has been done in school. The boarding curriculum is structured and becoming better planned. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities such as sporting activities, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and visits to Northwich for either personal or work experience reasons.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring teachers, when marking work, always explain the next step each pupil needs to take to improve.
- Ensure that subject leaders monitor pupils' achievements and plan how achievement can be further improved.
- Increase the opportunities for resident pupils to become more independent in taking decisions for themselves and organising their own routines.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils and students make good progress against the challenging targets that are set, although better marking could further the rate of improvement. Their progress is regularly tracked using a nationally recognised 'small step' approach and national curriculum levels. Most pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 reach their targets and in science many exceed them. Key Stage 4 and sixth form students achieve particularly well in the GCSE, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and other accredited courses. Pupils, regardless of their learning difficulties, make good progress in their personal development, particularly in their economic well-being, because of the very good enterprise skills that older students develop.

Pupils achieve very well in creative subjects such as music, art and drama because of the innovative ways in which these subjects are taught. Pupils also achieve very well in physical education where there is a strong emphasis on developing teamwork and maintaining a good level of fitness. Pupils with complex communication difficulties make good progress, particularly when taught using specialist techniques such as symbols and pictures to help structure their learning activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Clear boundaries are set so pupils know what is expected of them and, as a result, their behaviour is good. Praise is used most effectively and builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils

respond positively in their lessons and enjoy learning. Attendance is exceptionally good and pupils are only absent if they are unwell. Pupils talk knowledgeably about how to keep healthy and the need for healthy lifestyles. They think healthy snacks and water being available in the classrooms are good ideas. They enjoy taking part in sports competitions and know this helps to build a good team spirit. 'Everyone gets on with each other, if there are problems then you tell an adult and it gets sorted out', comments a pupil. Young Enterprise initiatives, such as the Whiz-Biz Company, run by students in the sixth form, give them a really good insight into money and financial matters. Pupils know they can make a difference to school life and want to contribute to it because they feel their views are listened to. As one pupil comments, 'in the residential setting we talk all the time, staff listen to what you have to say and help if they can.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Lessons are thoroughly planned with challenging activities for pupils of all abilities. Pupils are frequently engaged in active, creative and collaborative tasks. Information and communication technology is used effectively and makes learning interesting, enjoyable and accessible. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and constantly challenge them through skilful questioning. This has a very positive impact on pupils' communication skills by fostering a requirement that pupils explain their views and justify their answers. Teachers and teaching assistants are energetic and enthusiastic in lessons; they establish a positive learning climate and pupils feel well supported. Behaviour is managed really effectively and therefore pupils spend time concentrating on tasks and working hard. Teachers do not always give sufficient feedback to pupils to help them to progress to the target that has been set.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The enrichment of the curriculum is good and provides many opportunities for pupils to achieve well in creative and sporting activities. Regular special curriculum weeks; for example, national science week, spark an excitement in pupils that ripples through the school and results in significant progress in pupils' personal, social and academic skills. Visits and visitors provide experiences that enthuse and excite pupils and generate an enjoyment and purpose in learning. The good range of additional activities develops pupils' talents and interests and motivates them to participate in many community activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This is a safe and caring school where pupils feel valued and parents feel their children are well looked after. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are good and this means that the most vulnerable or at risk pupils are quickly identified and supported. Child protection arrangements to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are in place. Careful attention is given to pupils medical and welfare needs in both the school and residential setting. Close liaison with parents and a good range of support agencies also contributes significantly to this aspect of care. Very good induction procedures help new pupils to settle quickly into school routines. Good quality support is provided by the Connexions service and older students are clearly guided on the possible future opportunities available to them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership in setting out a clear vision for the school and works well with the senior leadership team (SLT) in providing direction and purpose to the school. The monitoring by the SLT is thorough but subject leaders do not yet have a good grasp of how well their subjects are doing. Currently, they have limited responsibility for tracking progress and in ensuring that pupils' progress is as good as it should be. The SLT motivate the staff in teaching an enriched and relevant curriculum and enables the school to be as inclusive as possible with pupils. The SLT work effectively with parents and pupils and secures their involvement and recognises their support as crucial in taking the school forward. The governing body is closely involved in the work of the school and monitoring its effectiveness and therefore provides good challenge and support to help the school to move forward.

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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

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	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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	2
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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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	2	
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

I really enjoyed the two days that I recently spent in your school. Thank you for making me welcome and sharing your opinions about the school. I was very impressed by the way that you helped each other and looked after the school building. I entirely agree with your views that you go to a good school because of the many strengths it has.

- Staff help you to learn in every subject.
- Staff and pupils get on well together.
- You have loads of opportunities to go to school clubs and other activities.
- The staff really want you to do well and work very hard to help in whatever way they can.

So, I am asking you to make the school get even better by following the advice that teachers give you about how to improve your work. I think that you can help yourselves and the school by continuing to behave well, setting an example to others and helping each other. As you move through the school, you get more chances to go out of school and get work experience. It is really important that you make the most out of these opportunities because then you can choose the right college course to help you in the future. I have spoken with the head and we agreed the school will help you in three specific ways. First, boarding pupils will be given more opportunities to become more independent to help you when you leave. Second, teachers will, when marking your work, explain the next step you need to take to improve. Third, subject leaders will keep a close eye on making sure your progress is as good as it should be.

I hope you carry on working hard all year and continue to be as helpful to each other as I observed during my visit to your school.