



Greenside School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117690
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290897
Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007
Reporting inspector Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Shephall Green
School category	Community special		Stevenage
Age range of pupils	2–19		Hertfordshire SG2 9XS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01438 315356
Number on roll (school)	112	Fax number	01438 748034
Number on roll (6th form)	30		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr C Colvin
		Headteacher	Mr D Victor
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001		

Age group 2–19	Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007	Inspection number 290897
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a special school for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. There has been a rise in numbers since the last inspection, with a particular increase in the number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and complex difficulties. The number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties transferring into post-16 has also increased significantly.

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 with outstanding features. It has made good improvement since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further. It provides good value for money.

Throughout the school, pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and achieve well in response to good teaching and exceptionally high quality care. Parents appreciate this a great deal and express a high level of satisfaction. As one parent put it 'My son has a real possibility of leading a semi-independent life because he is encouraged every step of the way to achieve in areas that will make a real difference to the quality of his life'. Children in the Foundation Stage and students at post-16 are well provided for and both progress well.

Throughout the school, teachers manage pupils' behaviour extremely well so that pupils learn and grow in an environment that is calm and positive. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are managed very skilfully and the school responds with great sensitivity to their personal needs. Improving the development of pupils' communication skills is a current whole school priority. Some staff make good use of signing and pictures to explain to pupils what is about to happen and to involve them in decision making. However, aids such as switches and symbols, as well as signing, are not used as frequently as they should be as a matter of course, especially for pupils with complex needs. There is variation in the quality of lesson planning. In the best lessons, teachers identify precisely what they want each pupil to achieve but some lessons are not planned sufficiently to match the needs of individual pupils.

The previous inspection - and the one before that - judged the accommodation to be inadequate. An increase in numbers since then has put further pressure on the limited space available. The school is working with the local authority and the neighbouring secondary school in an attempt to resolve this. In the meantime, staff do all they can to overcome restrictions imposed by the premises. Outstanding links with other educational establishments mean that pupils at Key Stage 4 go to the neighbouring secondary school for some subjects, and most students at post-16 attend courses in further education colleges for part of their time. However, lack of space places some restrictions on activities at post-16 and it particularly affects pupils at Key Stage 3. The school is constrained in the way it groups these pupils and has no specialist facilities, for instance, for science and design and technology.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and is innovative and outward looking in his determination to meet each pupil's needs as fully as possible. He is supported exceptionally well by the deputy head, who has developed a package of computerised assessment materials of outstanding quality that is beginning to raise pupils' achievement. Other staff, with key responsibilities, provide good support and the school is accurate in the evaluation of its own effectiveness. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not as rigorous as it should be in identifying and sharing best practice or remedying inconsistencies. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school provides well for students at post-16. Good teaching and a curriculum matched to their needs enable students to achieve well. Their personal development is outstanding and firms who provide work experience report that they have a 'can do' attitude. The inadequate accommodation makes it very difficult for students to come together as a group, however, and limited space in the post-16 block particularly affects those with mobility difficulties and complex needs. Post-16 provision is led well and gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that teachers match work consistently to the needs of individual pupils and that they regularly use suitable aids and methods to support pupils' communication.
- Make urgent representations to secure a solution to the school's ongoing accommodation difficulties.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Although pupils achieve well, standards are well below the national average as a result of their learning difficulties and disabilities. They make good progress towards the challenging targets in their individual education plans and exceptionally good progress in developing independence skills. As they move through the school, pupils make good progress in gaining basic skills in literacy and numeracy, but the progress of pupils who need support in communicating varies from one class to another. When aids such as switches and symbols are not made available as a matter of course, individual pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Throughout the school, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress. Attractive artwork on display shows that pupils make very good progress in expressing their ideas in two and three dimensions. Pupils make outstanding progress in swimming: the vast majority learn how to swim during their time at the school and some extend their skills by going to the local adult pool. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make good progress in the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Transition Challenge and those at post-16 build on this in the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' and Entry Level 'Life Skills' courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning and parents confirm that their children like coming to school. Attendance is good and behaviour is exceptionally good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The wide range of educational visits including, for example, to a Buddhist Monastery where pupils had lunch with the monks, and the superb use of drama where pupils have enacted the story of 'Richard III' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', significantly enrich their personal awareness. High quality relationships and social harmony are evident throughout the school. Pupils display trust and respect for adults as well as utmost care and consideration for one another. Older pupils contribute to decisions about school improvement and a high number are actively pursuing the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. Pupils learn how to stay healthy and safe: they take part in physical activities with real enthusiasm. Work-related learning helps them to develop life skills and to grow in maturity so that they are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well, including that of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Teachers generally use their teaching assistants well and there is some high quality support, especially by individual assistants who work with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The way teaching meets the needs of pupils with complex learning difficulties, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. Lesson planning is at its best in swimming, where very precise learning objectives are identified for each pupil, together with an explanation of how each target will be achieved. Most teachers plan their lessons well and the assessment package developed within the school means that they all have a great deal of information from which to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. However, some teaching remains only satisfactory, particularly where teachers do not identify what individual pupils are meant to gain from particular activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good: the strong emphasis on physical activity and the development of independence skills is highly relevant to pupils' needs. Personal, social, and health

education (PSHE) permeates the life of the school, with a clear emphasis on enjoyment of learning and the building of pupils' self-esteem at its heart. Information and communication technology is used well throughout the school to support pupils' learning. The school has developed outstanding links with many other educational establishments. These enable pupils to learn alongside their mainstream peers in PSHE and sport, as well as going some way to overcoming restrictions imposed by inadequacies in the school's accommodation. In addition to the time they spend at college, close partnership between the school and Connexions staff provides students with good work experience placements. For pupils of all ages, learning is enriched by an outstanding range of educational visits and visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support underpin pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. All the staff ensure pupils learn and grow in a safe and supportive environment, and robust arrangements are in place for protecting and safeguarding them. The school works in close collaboration with health professionals, therapists and other outside agencies in meeting pupils' care and personal needs. Its highly flexible approach to meeting the needs of those with the most challenging behavioural difficulties is exceptionally effective. Partnership with parents is strong and they are kept fully involved in decisions about their children's education and development. The school has a good understanding of how well pupils are doing and individual education plans include clear, achievable targets which are shared regularly with parents and made available to pupils in a pictorial format in many classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership is good. Senior leaders are highly committed to meeting pupils' individual needs and the flexible way the school works around pupils' behavioural difficulties shows how much this vision is shared by all the staff.

Self-evaluation is accurate and senior managers have begun to analyse data to assist them in judging the school's performance. Links with mainstream schools have been used to good effect in improving the quality of teaching. Staff have good opportunities to undertake professional development. As part of their monitoring, managers at all levels undertake lesson observations and the school has made extensive use of external consultants. However, the drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning from within the school is not as rigorous as it could be. As a result, inconsistencies from one teacher to another are not systematically identified and resolved, and the school does not make as much use as it could of the skills of the best teachers in sharing their good practice.

Governors make a good contribution to the school. They have an accurate understanding of its work, collect information for themselves and ask perceptive and relevant questions to assist them in decision making.

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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?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	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	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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	2	
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	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

20 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Greenside School, Shephall Green, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 9XS

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now, I am writing to let you know what we found out about the school.

This is a good school that is outstanding in the way it cares for you and helps you to become as independent as possible. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and how you grow in confidence during your time there. You are making really good progress in your personal development, and good teaching helps you to make good progress with your work. Although there are still problems with the school buildings and there is not much space, especially for the eldest students, the school has extremely good links with other schools and it uses these to provide you with extra opportunities. It is good that some of you are able to work with pupils from mainstream schools as you get older and at post-16 to spend some of your time at college.

The headteacher and senior managers lead and manage the school well. They want to make the school even better for you and we have asked them to do this by checking even more carefully to make sure you learn as much as you could in all your lessons. You can help them by trying really hard in your lessons and continuing to be really kind to one another.

Yours sincerely

M J Goodchild

Lead inspector