

# Gateacre Community Comprehensive School

Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104700
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	301676
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Wall

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1613
6th form	264
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Gerrard Lonergan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Grange Lane Gateacre Liverpool Merseyside L25 4SD
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4281569
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 4211329

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 May 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	301676

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Gateacre Community Comprehensive is much larger than an average size secondary school. It serves areas of mixed social and economic circumstances. Nearly all students are of White British heritage and have English as their mother tongue. Many more students than usual are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school is a local authority resourced school for students with visual impairment. Over the last six years, the profile of attainment on entry to the school has declined following the closure of a local school. The school was designated as a specialist school for arts and humanities in September 2005, at which time the headteacher took up his post.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. It offers satisfactory value for money. The school has several good features such as the curriculum. The introduction of a range of new courses and qualifications, more suited to the range of learners' needs, has brought about a significant rise in the number of students attaining five or more higher grades at GCSE over the last three years. Attainment is good in many subjects such as English, religious studies and information and communications technology (ICT). However, students' attainment in science is not high enough and, in mathematics, standards are low because teachers have been too slow in adapting their teaching methods to meet the needs of the changing nature of the school's intake. These weaknesses mean that students' attainment is average and their achievement is satisfactory overall. The headteacher and other senior leaders are tackling these areas by more rigorous monitoring of classroom teaching and by holding teachers more closely to account for students' results. The results attained in the mock GCSE examinations this academic year and in the coursework modules completed by Year 11 students in science and mathematics indicate that the initiatives are having a significant impact on raising standards and achievement. Nearly all parents are supportive of the school, although some feel that homework should be set more regularly.

Students' personal development and well-being are good, as is the quality of care, guidance and support the school offers. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with visual impairment, are fully included in all aspects of school life. Students enjoy school and although attendance rates are below the national average and not yet high enough they are improving gradually. This is as a result of new initiatives such as the provision of a wider range of courses for lower attaining students and for the disaffected students which give them more motivation to attend regularly, especially in Years 10 and 11. Students behave very well in lessons and around school. They are polite, respectful and welcoming to visitors. They feel safe and praise the level of care and support the school provides. 'We are lucky to have such a fantastic head of year. Nothing is too much trouble and we feel really valued as individuals,' is a typical comment. The school is using its specialist status to very good effect to increase the range of activities students undertake in the community and by staging drama and music productions for a wide audience. Specialist status is also helping to revitalise the after-school enrichment activities in sport to add to students' acquisition of healthier lifestyles. By the time students leave Year 11 they are articulate, well-rounded young adults ready and eager to make the most of their life after school.

Much teaching and learning is good but overall it is satisfactory because there is too much variation in its quality, as seen in the uneven outcomes in GCSE results at the end of Year 11. While some subject managers see it as part of their responsibilities to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning, this is not yet universally the case and results in inconsistencies. Similarly, the use of data to monitor students' progress and plan future learning is exemplary in some subject areas but basic in others. This results in an uneven pattern of students' knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their attainment.

The headteacher is providing effective leadership with a clear focus on improving standards and achievement. A recent reorganisation and closer definition of responsibilities of the senior management team mean that senior leaders now have more confidence in carrying out their duties and appreciate the greater freedom they have to introduce initiatives and influence the direction the school is taking. Because of this, standards and achievement are improving. The

school has effective procedures for self-evaluation and knows what it needs to do to bring about further improvement. Good leadership is tackling the areas of underachievement effectively, giving the school a good capacity for further improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The sixth form is satisfactory. The number of students staying on is growing. Students with visual impairment in the sixth form make good progress because of the effective and intensive support they receive. Students enjoy the sixth form and greatly value the care and support they receive. They appreciate the impressive range of enrichment activities available to them. Students contribute to the life of the school, for example, by helping younger ones with reading. Standards at AS level and A2 level vary considerably from subject to subject. They are below average overall, representing satisfactory achievement considering students' below average attainment on entry to the sixth form. Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, much is good and engages students as independent learners. The curriculum is largely academic. Few courses offer appropriate opportunities to the growing number of less academic students, with the result that some find their studies too demanding. Collaborative arrangements with other local sixth form providers are developing to increase the breadth of courses offered. Guidance for students moving on to higher education or into employment is thorough.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise attainment in mathematics and science.
- Raise levels of attendance.
- Ensure that procedures for assessment are used effectively in all areas to improve standards and achievement.
- Ensure that all middle managers are effective in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Develop the range of sixth form courses to meet fully all students' needs.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students enter Year 7 with standards which are below average. They make satisfactory progress to attain below average standards by the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C has risen dramatically over the last three years, from 32% in 2004 to equal the national average of 58% in 2006. This represents good progress overall and the school exceeded its 2006 targets. However, there is too much variation in standards between different subjects. The proportion of students achieving five or more grades A\* to C in mathematics, for example, was well below the national average in 2006 and nowhere near high enough. Overall, therefore, students make only satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other students.

In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress from below average starting points overall to attain standards below the national average in AS and A2 level examinations.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students display positive attitudes because relationships are good across the school. Attendance, although improving, is still below average. In personal, social, health and citizenship lessons, they make sensible and mature contributions. All students are aware of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Large numbers join in the many additional sporting activities. Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. They show good understanding of right and wrong and have respect for the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students in all year groups feel safe and say that the school deals quickly and effectively with bullying when it happens. One student commented, 'I was bullied once and as soon as I reported it, it was dealt with and never happened again.' The school council is an active organisation and has brought about improvements to school uniform and the food at lunchtimes; 'It's much healthier for us as a result', was the general opinion. Learners develop many skills to equip them well for their future working lives, although progress in numeracy is limited for too many students.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school is investing energy and resources in developing teaching and learning styles and this is having a positive impact on lessons, meaning that much teaching and learning is good. In almost all lessons, relationships are positive and characterised by mutual respect. Students make the most progress in lessons where there is a good mix of talk and tasks, and where they are required to think for themselves. In less effective lessons, the teacher does too much talking so that students have too little opportunity for independent learning. Consequently, learning is passive and the rate of progress slows. This applies particularly when work is not well matched to the needs of all students. The use of assessment data to track students' achievement varies in quality. In ICT, for example, students know their targets, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This is not the case in less successful subject areas where students are not always clear about the relationship between day-to-day assessments in marking and their longer-term targets.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall and leads to satisfactory learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school is making very good use of its specialist status to broaden the range of taught courses offered in music, art and drama. Specialist status has also brought about a rejuvenation of the school's enrichment activities, especially in the arts, educational trips and visits. This is

having a positive effect on students' levels of motivation. 'Since we've become a specialist school there have been so many more interesting things to do. It means we're all a lot brighter and happier!' was one student's perceptive view. Recent changes in the organisation of teaching groups, combined with the introduction of a wider range of vocational and academic subjects in Key Stage 4, are having a positive impact on raising standards as seen in the improvement in GCSE results.

In the sixth form the range of courses meets the needs of higher attaining students, but the curriculum is insufficiently developed to meet the needs of students for whom academic courses are less suitable.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with outstanding features in the care and support for vulnerable students. There are very good arrangements with primary schools that help students settle quickly. Well managed monitoring and support help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make progress, with the provision notably strong in the unit for visually impaired students. Others who encounter difficulties in their school life, such as disaffected students, find their coping skills improve in the school's highly effective 'Learning Zone'. Appropriate procedures for safeguarding the students' welfare are in place and a good network of partnerships with outside agencies supports their well-being. Guidance for Key Stage 3 students has been strengthened to ensure they follow suitable courses in Key Stage 4, but guidance in Year 11 does not yet assure all students follow suitable programmes in the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support in the sixth form are good. Students feel safe and appreciate the level of direction they are given about how to plan for their time after the sixth form.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. At senior level, leadership and management are good. The headteacher, ably supported by other senior managers, is providing the school with very effective leadership to encourage a sharply focused concentration on improvement. Good teamwork is developing across the school as middle managers and teachers take on board the new agenda for improvement. Evaluation of examination performance by senior managers is becoming increasingly effective in identifying where improvements are needed and what actions are needed to achieve them, as in the case of better outcomes for lower attaining students. The school development plan identifies the key areas for improvement, although its success criteria for judging the effectiveness of new initiatives are not sufficiently sharp. The quality of leadership and management is less consistent at middle leader level. While some subject leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in their areas and help their teams make better use of data to set more challenging targets, others do not. The result is too much inconsistency in standards across subjects. The school's financial management is secure. The governing body provides effective support because it works in good partnership with the

school to make sure policy decisions are carefully reviewed in terms of what is best for the students.

Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. Collaboration with other sixth form providers to extend the range of courses offered is not yet sufficiently developed.



**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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**

Inspection of Gateacre Community Comprehensive School, Grange Lane,  
Gateacre, Liverpool, L25 4SD.

Thank you for making me and my colleagues so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. What you told us helped us a great deal in reaching our judgements about your school.

We think you are attending a satisfactory school overall but it has several real strengths and is improving quickly under the leadership of your headteacher, who is working very hard to make Gateacre even more successful. What struck us most was how happy you all appeared and how well you all got on together. You told us you enjoy being at school, especially in the sixth form, and that your teachers take good care of you so that you feel safe and valued. We think the school is working very hard to broaden the range of subjects you can choose at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form so that more of you can study at levels better suited to your needs and abilities. In many subjects you do well but in the main school and the sixth form we think there is too much variation in standards. In science and mathematics in the main school, for example, you should be doing much better so we are asking your headteacher to bring about improvement in these areas in particular. Although the situation is improving, too many of you are also failing to attend school as regularly as you should. So this is another area we are asking the school to tackle. We think the teachers in charge of subject areas are doing a good job to bring about improving standards. However, we should like to see them using data consistently to track your progress as you move through the school. We also want them to monitor more closely how effective teaching and learning is in their areas to ensure that it is consistently good.

We are confident that you will help your headteacher and staff bring about these improvements so that Gateacre can go from strength to strength in the coming years.