

Garratt Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101103
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	307584
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	160
6th form	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Corbally
Headteacher	Mrs Irene Parks
Date of previous school inspection	10 September 2003
School address	Waldron Road Earlsfield Wandsworth London SW18 3TB
Telephone number	020 8946 5769
Fax number	020 8947 5605

Age group	11-18
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Inspection number	307584

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Garratt Park is a special school with students drawn from a wide geographic area. All have statements of special educational need covering a very wide range of disabilities including speech and language, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and autism. Many students entering the school have a much greater complexity of need than in the past. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds with the greatest majority from white British backgrounds. A small number speak English as an additional language. Twelve students are registered in the school's Autistic Resource Base (ARB) but they also take part in main school activities. It is an Extended School with a wide range of before and after school provision. It has gained Healthy Schools, Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Garratt Park is a good school with outstanding features. It is highly effective in enabling students to develop their personal skills and gain access to qualifications which prepare them well for life after school. Comments such as 'The school works wonders' and 'it's one of the best' demonstrate that almost all parents and students are extremely positive about the school's provision. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and robust, and shows that noticeable improvements have taken place since the last inspection.

All students, including those of different backgrounds and abilities, achieve well. Although standards are well below the national average, every year almost all students attain nationally recognised Entry Level and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. A significant number attain at least one GCSE grade A* to G. This represents good achievement and is based on good teaching and the very effective way in which staff support students in developing their confidence and independence. In mathematics, in particular, staff ensure that students' learning is of a very high quality and, as a result, students achieve very well. In other subjects, however, not all staff fully challenge the learning of the growing number of students entering the school with a greater complexity of need. Excellent relationships are developed between students and staff and these are used very effectively to improve students' behaviour and achievement. Students' attitudes and behaviour are extremely good and lessons are calm and purposeful.

Overall, the curriculum is well matched to the needs and aspirations of students, with a good balance of academic, vocational and work-related courses which prepare students effectively for life after school. There is an outstanding programme of enrichment which makes a very important contribution to developing students' motivation and aspirations. The development of students' skills in language and communication, however, is not sufficiently embedded across all areas. The school has excellent links with others and students make an outstanding contribution to both the school and wider community. The care, guidance and support provided by all staff are exemplary and ensure that students are successfully challenged in a safe and secure environment to face the demands of the wider world.

The headteacher and the leadership team lead by example and provide a very clear vision and direction for the work of the school. They have an incisive understanding of its strengths and weaknesses with good account taken of the changing needs of the school population. These are reflected well in the priorities in the school development plan. Governors are active in school life and play an important role as the school's critical friend. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve in future.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve well as a result of good teaching. Virtually all gain ASDAN awards and Key Skills accreditation at Level 1 in Communication and in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). They have good rates of success in the National Skills Profile (NSP) accredited courses. The curriculum covers all expected areas and is particularly strong in promoting students' personal development. As in the main school, there are occasions where staff do not fully challenge the learning of students with the most complex needs. A well-focussed review of the provision is ensuring that improvements are taking place.

Excellent careers guidance is provided and virtually all students move on to further education, training or employment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff fully challenge the learning of all students, particularly those with the most complex needs.
- Ensure that students' language and communication skills are developed in all areas of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students of different abilities, including those in the ARB, invariably meet or exceed the challenging targets set for them. Given their starting point on entry to the school, students attain well in nationally accredited examinations. The school's strong focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT ensures that students make good progress in developing the key skills they will need in later life to support their economic well-being.

Students' achievement in mathematics is particularly good as a result of high quality teaching. Staff are enthusiastic about the subject and, in turn, students enjoy the challenges they are set and make very good progress. Overall, pupils achieve well in other subjects, but improvements can still be made because teaching is not as consistently good as it is in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development is a major strength. All make impressive gains in developing their confidence, independence and social skills. Students gain insight into their own feelings and how these affect others. They develop friendships and say that 'We learn to respect each other and our school'. They thoroughly enjoy school, have extremely positive attitudes and their behaviour is exemplary. For many there is significant improvement in behaviour from when they first joined the school. Attendance is generally good and, in discussion, students are able to describe the significant support that is given to help improve their attendance even further. Students care for each other very well indeed and the school council plays an active role in making decisions that affect everyone. Students develop an excellent understanding of healthy eating and say how much they like the healthy school meals. They appreciate the importance of being safety conscious and become very mature, making a particularly strong contribution to both the school and wider community; for example when acting as student mentors and in organising events to raise funds for charity. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Across the school teaching is good. Staff establish excellent relationships with students and these are used well to develop students' self-esteem. Staff are very positive in their approach and use praise very effectively to increase students' motivation and to improve both their concentration and behaviour. Support staff form an important part of the team and make a valuable contribution to the development of students' academic and personal skills. Throughout the school, teachers plan lessons conscientiously. They make particularly good use of students' individual targets to assess their progress and inform them how well they are doing and where they need to improve. In the outstanding lessons, such as a mathematics lesson seen in Year 11, staff make use of an exceptionally wide range of strategies to ensure that students with the most complex needs are fully challenged in their learning. However, this practice is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum provides an effective balance of academic, vocational and work-related activities matched to students' needs, including to those of students in the ARB. In the light of the changing school population a review of the curriculum is taking place because the development of language and communication skills is not sufficiently embedded across all areas. A comprehensive programme of personal development pervades all aspects of school life and enables students to make excellent progress in taking responsibility and in improving their social skills. The school has developed an extremely wide range of enrichment and out-of-school activities which some students refer to as 'amazing'. Activities undertaken as part of the Extended School provision, such as the breakfast club, make an important contribution.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Staff provide exemplary care. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and teaching and support staff show commitment to ensuring very high levels of care at all times. They are vigilant and meticulous in implementing the school's procedures. They listen carefully to students' concerns and help them to appreciate how they might 'think through and sort out situations' for themselves.

Support for pupils' personal and academic progress is excellent because staff have a secure understanding of the needs of each student. Clear individual targets are set and the sensitive way in which these are used plays a crucial part in helping students reflect on how they might improve in future. The school involves parents very effectively in its review procedures and in helping them to understand how they might support their child's learning. This is a particularly successful aspect of the work of the ARB.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school benefits from the very strong leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team. They have acted decisively to bring about good improvement since the last inspection. Excellent links have been established with parents and others to help take the school forward. The leadership team takes full account of the views of students when making important decisions, for example when undertaking significant development of the outside areas. Governors work closely with the headteacher and are effective in supporting the school's drive for improvement. They ensure that finances are carefully managed and that all statutory requirements are met.

Overall, the self-evaluation procedures are good with very strong input from senior staff. The very supportive and yet challenging way in which they monitor teaching and learning is effective in ensuring that improvements take place in line with the priorities set out in the school development plan. Governors show good insight into the changing needs of the school and they ask searching questions to ensure that the school's challenging targets are met. Middle managers have developed their skills well during the past year and are now making an active contribution to whole school reviews. Increasing use of ICT to present the data collected from monitoring is making it easier for the school to demonstrate its overall effectiveness.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

28 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Garratt Park School, London, SW18 3TB

Thank you for your help when we came to inspect your school on 18 and 19 September. You said that Garratt Park is a good school and you are very proud of it. You think that the staff help you to learn a lot so that you make good progress. We agree with your views.

We could see that you try hard and enjoy your work. You achieve well and usually reach or exceed your targets. You all show respect towards each other and you work together extremely well. Your behaviour is excellent and you recognise that you have all improved a great deal in this area. Staff work very well as a team and they make learning enjoyable. They organise a wide range of activities out of lesson time. We agree that activities provided at lunchtime are 'amazing'. All of the staff look after you extremely well and you are very well informed about the importance of trying to make sure you stay healthy. You are very aware of your individual targets and, especially through discussions with staff, use them very well to help you improve.

The headteacher and senior staff support the staff very well and are helping everyone to develop their skills so that the school improves. At present, they are working with staff to make sure that all of you work as hard as can all of the time and that every opportunity is taken to develop your skills in language and communication. By helping them in this you can make sure that Garratt Park School improves even further.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton (Lead Inspector)