

Greenbank High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104955
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	308717
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	932
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Heather Shulver
Headteacher	Mrs Pat McQuade
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Hastings Road Southport Merseyside PR8 2LT
Telephone number	01704 567591
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Greenbank High is the only community girls school in Sefton local authority. It serves a wide area and takes pupils from 15 primary schools and a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Around 8% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. There are five looked-after children in the school.

The school has been a specialist language college since 1998. The school gained the International Schools Award in 2006, the Bronze Eco Award in spring 2007 and the Healthy Schools Award in autumn 2007. It has also achieved the Artsmark Award and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Greenbank High School provides a satisfactory quality of education with many good and better features. The headteacher and senior leadership team are providing strong leadership and clear direction based on accurate self-evaluation. School improvement planning is good and there is a shared commitment amongst all staff to improve pupils' achievement. Financial management is good and the school currently provides satisfactory value for money. Governors know the school well; they take a lead role in some developments and provide effective support and challenge on key issues. The reorganised senior team has a good balance of expertise. Senior leaders work effectively with directors of learning to provide both challenge and support. The school has good capacity to make further improvements.

Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress as they move through the school and leave with standards that are above the national average. In 2006 and 2007 there was some underachievement in English by the more able pupils. Over the last two years the high number of staff absences arising from maternity leave and long-term sickness has had some negative impact on examination results, especially in English, mathematics and science. Staffing is now more stable.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good and outstanding practice. The school is working hard to develop rigorous processes to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. This is beginning to have an impact, but systems are not yet fully coordinated so that good practice can be shared. Effective systems have been put in place to monitor pupils' personal and academic progress. The school provides good pastoral care and support for pupils through a range of initiatives including peer mentoring and learning mentor support. Pupils behave well and are supportive of each other. They have positive attitudes to learning and want to achieve highly. Recent developments in marking and assessment have gone some way in enabling pupils to know how to improve their work but practice is not of consistently good quality across the whole school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and make good progress.

Language college status greatly enhances provision and achievement of the pupils. It underpins curriculum planning and provision for modern foreign languages is outstanding. Cultural development is enhanced through the international dimension and pupils have an excellent understanding of the history, customs and needs of people from different cultures. Pupils enjoy school and relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good. Some parents expressed concern about bullying although this was not evident during the inspection. Pupils feel that incidents are rare and are effectively dealt with if they should occur. The majority of parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with school and confidence in the leadership team, stating for example, 'Pupils build mature relationships and are treated with respect and support' and 'My daughter has gained in confidence. The school has stretched her in subjects she is good at and given extra help where needed.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers fully understand the components of high quality learning and teaching and put these into practice.
- Raise achievement, particularly in English and by the more able students.
- Ensure a consistent approach to marking and feedback so that all pupils know how to improve their work.

A small proportion of the school's 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and leave with standards that are above the national average. By the end of Year 9 the standards reached are above average in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. When compared with pupils of similar abilities in similar schools the progress they make is broadly in line with expectations although varying across subjects. In 2006 and 2007 there was some underachievement in English, particularly at the higher levels.

Standards reached by the end of Year 11 remain above the national average and are broadly in line with expectations based on their previous attainment. There has been a rising trend since the last inspection with the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE reaching a record high in 2006. This level has been sustained in 2007. The benefit of language college status is reflected in high standards achieved in Spanish. The introduction of vocational courses has helped to motivate pupils to achieve success, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT) where pupils on the diploma course achieved the equivalent of four good GCSE grades. All pupils leave the school with a qualification. The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; they are well supported and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding features. The majority of pupils enjoy school and attendance levels are good. Behaviour throughout the school is good. Most pupils are considerate and supportive of each other. They are cooperative in lessons and want to achieve highly. Some parents expressed concern about bullying although pupils themselves are less concerned and feel that incidents are effectively dealt with if they should occur. Pupils have confidence in the school's pastoral systems and feel safe. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years and fixed term exclusions are low.

The school's encouragement of healthy lifestyles has been recognised by a Healthy Schools Award. Pupils show good awareness of health issues; they enjoy healthy eating options and participate in a wide range of physical activities. Pupils can take on responsibility through serving on the increasingly effective school council, through peer mentoring and the pupil leadership team. Many pupils make an outstanding contribution to their school and to local and international communities, for example through fundraising and special events. The school helps pupils effectively to acquire the skills they need for their future economic well-being. Standards of literacy and numeracy are high. Older pupils have good opportunities to develop work-related skills through the curriculum, enterprise education and a well planned programme of work-related learning supported by outside agencies.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Cultural development is enhanced through the language college status and the international dimension, and is outstanding. Pupils' understanding of the history, customs and needs of people from other cultures is exceptional.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some good and outstanding teaching. In good and better lessons, teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and plan carefully to engage pupils with activities that secure good learning. Pupils benefit from opportunities to work collaboratively and assess their own learning and others' work. The pace is energetic and pupils enjoy their learning. For example, in a Year 7 Spanish lesson, pupils enthusiastically sang the conjugation of the verb 'tener' and felt confident enough to ask routine questions in Spanish. Feedback is focused to enable pupils to understand what they must do to make progress. In satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning is slower and pupils are less clear about the purpose and direction of their learning. As a consequence, engagement can flag and progress is not as strong. Some of these lessons can also be overly teacher directed and with fewer opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively.

Pupils are aware of their target grades and levels. They welcome the school's recently introduced system for tracking progress. However, feedback in lessons and through marking is inconsistent and this can limit pupils' understanding and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curricular provision is good and in some aspects, outstanding. Provision for modern foreign languages is outstanding with all pupils studying at least one language and the great majority at least two. There are well developed links with partner primary schools that help start the early introduction to the range of languages on offer. Good links with the sixth form college and local industry result in good opportunities for work-related learning. ICT provision has been greatly improved since the last inspection with the introduction of a national diploma course and improved facilities. The curriculum helps pupils to understand how to stay healthy and learn safe work habits, for example, in science and technology. The Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) has been welcomed by pupils and provides good preparation for the world of work. Supported study lessons are effective in raising levels of literacy and numeracy. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The curriculum provides outstanding enrichment opportunities that enable pupils of all levels of capability to discover and develop talents and interests. Many pupils improve their speaking skills and understanding of different cultures by participating in trips abroad that stem from the school's international projects. There are high levels of participation in extra-curricular activities; one pupil commented that she could not fit in all the activities that she would like to pursue.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. A wide range of initiatives, including peer mentoring and support from learning mentors, provides very good pastoral care. Systems to monitor personal development and address specific needs are good. Close links with primary schools support the smooth transition of pupils into Year 7. Guidance on options, further education opportunities and careers helps pupils to make well informed choices about their

futures. Good cooperation with outside agencies ensures the protection of vulnerable pupils. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements and the school takes all reasonable precautions to ensure that risk assessments and other health and safety procedures are in place. Systems to ensure that suitable staff are employed are in line with government guidance.

Effective systems have been put in place to monitor pupils' academic progress. These systems enable the staff to set pupils individual academic targets and track their progress over time. Pupils are aware of their targets and are well motivated to achieve higher levels. Recent developments in marking and assessment have gone some way in enabling pupils to know how to improve their work but practice is not of consistently good quality across the whole school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school and the senior leadership team works well together to bring this about. Leaders at all levels are clear about the need to improve achievement, especially for the more able pupils. They also have a common understanding that this will be realised through greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. A strength of the school is that the commitment to improvement is shared by all staff, as exemplified by the increasing responsibilities taken by both teaching and non-teaching staff to support pupils who are underachieving. Financial management is good and leaders and governors deploy and use resources efficiently.

The school's self-evaluation is thorough, clearly identifies its strengths and weaknesses and leads to focused improvement plans that are being implemented according to detailed timescales. Senior leaders work closely with directors of learning to provide both support and challenge. Systematic processes are in place for setting increasingly challenging targets, tracking progress and putting strategies in place for intervening when pupils are failing to meet them.

Governance is strong. Governors know the school well and have a good understanding of key issues. They take a lead role in some developments such as promoting community cohesion and being proactive in evaluating their own effectiveness. The governing body is effective in acting positively as a 'critical friend' to the headteacher and in holding the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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 welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed our conversations with you and were impressed by your cooperative and supportive attitudes to one another. Your enjoyment of school was very evident.

We judged your school to be providing a satisfactory quality of education with many good and some better features. We found the care, guidance and support provided by your teachers and support staff to be good. We were most impressed by the range of opportunities provided for your personal development and enrichment through the school's language college status and international dimension. Your understanding of the history, customs and needs of people from other cultures is exceptional and your language skills are excellent. You have a good understanding of how to look after yourselves and you told us how much you enjoy the healthy eating options and the interesting range of physical activities on offer.

We found behaviour in the school to be good although some of your parents expressed a concern about bullying. This was not evident to us during the inspection and you told us that incidents are rare and are effectively dealt with if they should occur. You were cooperative in lessons and keen to contribute and achieve well. We were pleased to see the high standards you achieve in tests and examinations. Most of you are making at least satisfactory progress as you move through school. However, we think some of you could do better, particularly in English. Your teachers are all highly committed to helping you achieve the best you can and are already working hard to improve the quality of teaching and assessment. School leaders are providing clear direction to bring about further improvements for you.

These are the aspects that we have asked your school to improve further:

- ensure that all teachers fully understand the components of high quality learning and teaching and put these into practice
- raise achievement, particularly in English and by the more able students
- ensure a consistent approach to marking and feedback so that all pupils know how to improve their work.