

Greenacre School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118817
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	313102
Inspection date	17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Dowgill

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	901
6th form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Butler
Headteacher	Andrew Reese
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	157 Walderslade Road Walderslade Chatham ME5 0LP
Telephone number	01634 861593
Fax number	01634 869246

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. During a one-day visit, the inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

the role of senior and middle managers in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and the impact this has on improving students' achievement and standards

the effectiveness of the academic guidance in supporting and challenging different groups of students and the impact of this on improving outcomes, and

the management of student behaviour through the rewards and sanctions policy.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, planning documents, observation of the school at work, interviews with staff and students, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Greenacre is an oversubscribed specialist sports college with a second specialism in information and communication technology (ICT). The school draws from 24 local primary schools. It has far fewer higher attaining students than normally expected because of the local selective education system. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Fewer than 5% of students are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion whose first language is believed not to be English is well below the national average. Nearly half the students have identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. The school is a designated provider for physically impaired students. The school has a joint sixth form with Walderslade Girls' School and has collaborative arrangements with three other secondary schools and a further education college. The school has been awarded quality marks for inclusion, basic skills and ICT, SportsMark 2007 and healthy schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Since my son has been at Greenacre he has made good progress. He enjoys lessons and the after-school clubs and much of this is due to the good teaching and learning at the school.' This view from a parent sums up many of the outcomes of this inspection. Greenacre is a good and improving school. All staff are committed to the school's vision of 'Access to Success' and are working hard to achieve this for all students.

The success of the school is as a result of the good leadership and management provided by the headteacher and senior leadership group. Senior leaders are supported well by middle managers who are taking more responsibility for school improvement. All leaders share a clear vision for the development of the school, which places the students at the heart of all they do. Teamwork amongst leaders at all levels is effective and has created good capacity for further improvement. The school's specialist status makes a considerable contribution to the whole school and local community. It has enhanced the school's focus on enjoyment and health as well as developing core elements of sport, such as the importance of discipline and teamwork, across the school.

Students join the school with levels of attainment that are well below average. By the time they leave the school in Year 11 they attain standards that are broadly in line with the national expectations for five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. This represents good progress. In 2007, the students did particularly well in art and design and English literature. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics is however below the national average. A strength of the school is the good achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although the school is effective in ensuring that the majority of students achieve GCSEs at grade C, those who enter the school with above average levels of attainment do not gain enough higher GCSE grades. In recent years, results in Year 9 national tests have remained below average, representing satisfactory progress from when students started school. The school's rigorous analysis of the performance of the current Years 9 and 11 students indicates an improvement in examination results in 2008 compared to 2007.

The school has recently introduced a half-termly system of monitoring each student's progress towards meeting their target grades. This robust process has given the school a more accurate picture of student performance. Where the school identifies underperforming students, it successfully implements a range of strategies to support individuals to get them back on track as quickly as possible. Students appreciate this additional support. Students are fully aware of their target grades and most know the small steps they have to take to make progress towards achieving these.

The good progress made by most students is a result of good teaching and learning. In most lessons, teachers have established good relationships with the students and this supports effective learning. In a few lessons where there is minor disruptive behaviour, middle and senior leaders are providing effective support to staff. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and most plan lessons with clear learning outcomes. Teachers use well a range of activities to engage students and make good use of the ICT facilities available to support learning. Many are confident in using groupwork, and students appreciate a variety of learning activities. Good pace is present in most lessons. Although most teachers plan to meet the range of abilities within their classes, they do not always match closely enough teaching strategies to students'

learning needs and so not all are challenged to achieve their full potential. Some teaching is less effective as teachers are not systematically building upon students' prior learning. Teachers' marking of students' work is generally good and provides them with information about what they need to do to improve. Students value this feedback. Teaching assistants provide good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this greatly assists in the progress they make. Learning mentors also make good contributions to lessons.

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students are mature, responsible and conscious of the needs of others. Most students enjoy school and are appreciative of the wide range of opportunities available to them, in particular the extra-curricular activities. They are aware of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and the enhanced focus on this through the school's specialism has resulted in high levels of participation in sport. Many students also make a good contribution to the community in both the school and the local area. As part of the specialist status, students have achieved the Junior Sports Leaders Award and help coach physical education in local schools. The students have a good understanding of the skills they require to secure their future economic well-being and are provided with a broad range of opportunities to develop these. A few parents expressed concern about the standards of behaviour in the school. Students are supportive of the rewards and sanctions policy the school has put in place and state that behaviour has improved both in lessons and around the school. They expressed that they feel safe and that the school deals with sporadic bullying and racist incidents swiftly and effectively. The school is welcoming and orderly, and behaviour in and out of lessons is good. There is a higher than average rate of fixed-term exclusions but this is because of the high expectations the school has of student behaviour. The school has effective strategies in place to ensure the number of exclusions will fall rapidly.

There is a strong emphasis in the school of building the self-esteem of students and the staff work well as a team to support all students to do their best. One student effectively summed up the good care, guidance and support provided when saying, 'this is a good school, a good place to be – there's always someone to talk to and help you.' Many parental questionnaires also reflected the good support provided by staff. The house system works well, promoting motivation, teamwork and a sense of achievement amongst the students. The school uses its very good partnerships with a range of external providers to support students' needs well and regularly involves parents in this. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very effectively. Staff identify their needs early, put intervention strategies in place and carefully monitor their progress.

The curriculum provides good support for students' academic and personal development. The school has broadened the courses it offers in Years 10 and 11 to meet the individual needs of students and provides a good range of both academic and vocational GCSEs. The school's specialist status is having a positive impact on the curriculum with all students studying for a qualification in physical education. Key themes of the specialism are also evident in other subjects and across the school, for example, in the development of provision for gifted and talented students. There is a published programme for tutor periods and good use is made of this time to support students' social and moral development. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music, but also in other areas, for example chess and robotics. Take up of these activities is good. Through the specialism and other subjects, the school is making a very good contribution to the wider community, for example in its partnership work with local primary schools.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance and clear plans for its development. The school is committed to developing the quality of management at all levels

and is involving less experienced middle managers in high quality professional development. Evaluation is an ongoing feature of the school's work and involves both senior and middle leaders. All subjects are evaluated on an annual basis and there are frequent discussions between senior and middle managers that focus on performance. Where appropriate, the school uses external consultants effectively to provide it with an independent view. The school sets itself challenging yet realistic targets that reflect its high expectations and staff rise well to these challenges. Senior leaders manage resources well and best use is made of the available accommodation. Systems for the safeguarding of students meet current government requirements. The governing body is committed to the school and is involved in all areas of its work. As a result, governors are fully informed about the school and provide a good balance of support and challenge. The governing body is also building capacity through training to ensure governors are up-to-date with current developments in secondary education.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The joint sixth form effectively meets the needs of the students. The increasing number of students from both schools who are choosing to stay on in the sixth form and the steadily improving examination results are testament to this. Standards are close to the national average, although not consistently in all subjects. The results in vocational subjects are slightly better than in A-level subjects. Based on their GCSE performance, most students make satisfactory progress. In the past, some students embarked on A-level courses that were not wholly suited to their needs. As a result, despite the good teaching, they have not done as well as they might. Senior leaders in both schools have recognised this and students are now provided with much clearer guidance about the minimum entry requirements for different courses. A broad curriculum meets students' needs and aspirations well and results in high retention rates. Students are able to select from a wide range of academic and vocational courses, both in the sixth form and through the arrangements with other schools. Although students follow a programme that focuses on aspects of their social development, there are insufficient opportunities within the curriculum to enhance their personal development and ensure that they are fully prepared for their future lives.

Students enjoy being in the sixth form and their attitudes to work are positive. They make a good contribution to the life of the school through, for example, acting as 'study buddies' to younger students. Students participate in a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Pending a permanent appointment, the interim arrangements for leading and managing the sixth form are working well. Recently introduced systems for tracking students' progress more rigorously are effective and ensure that appropriate support and guidance are provided at an early stage. Students value the support they receive from staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that high attainers achieve their full potential in external tests and examinations
- ensure that planned teaching strategies are matched closely to the learning needs of the students so as to maximise their progress

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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	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
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?	2	2
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	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	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?	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.

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

18 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Greenacre School, Walderslade, ME5 0LP

Many thanks for your contribution to the recent inspection. We enjoyed speaking to you and listening to your views of the school. We judged that Greenacre is a good and improving school and much of our findings are summed up in what one of you told us, 'This is a good school, a good place to be – there's always someone to talk to and help you.'

We found that the school and sixth form are well led and managed. The standards that you attain both at GCSE and in the sixth form are broadly in line with national averages. You make good progress between Year 7 and GCSE and satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Good teaching and a curriculum that gives you choice and meets your needs are two of the reasons for this. You all seem to know your targets and the school is now monitoring these more closely so it can help you meet them. You can play your part in this by working hard to achieve these.

Your personal development is good and you understand why it is important to be healthy and stay safe. You told us that you appreciate the rewards and sanctions policy and that behaviour has improved. You can obviously help in this by behaving well the whole time as most of you do. The care and support you get from the staff are good and you told us there is always someone you can speak to.

The school's specialist sports status has also made a good contribution to improving the school. It has helped provide a range of extra-curricular activities that many of you participate in. There are also many other things you can do after school including music and we would encourage those of you who do not get involved in these activities to do so.

We have asked the school to look at two areas to help things improve further:

- ensure that those of you who are high attainers achieve your full potential in tests and examinations
- ensure that planned teaching strategies are matched closely to your learning needs so as to maximise your progress.

Good luck in the future.

Paul Dowgill Lead inspector



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Lead inspector