

Goldwyn Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119042
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313168
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim O'Connor
Headteacher	Bob Law
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
School address	Godinton Lane Great Chart Ashford TN23 3BT
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Goldwyn Community Special School provides education for students with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many students join the school having had extended periods out of education and all have a statement of special educational needs. Seventy-five per cent of students have been out of school for at least six months prior to admission. Approximately 20% of students are in the care of their local authority. Previous poor attendance, disrupted periods of schooling and the nature of their complex needs mean that most students enter the school with standards of work that are exceptionally below that expected of those their age nationally. The school moved into new, purpose built accommodation on the site of the old school in January 2008. There is provision for both boys and girls but currently only boys attend the school. The boys come from a wide area of Kent, and are mostly of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Goldwyn Community Special School is a good school that has improved rapidly since the last inspection. In the face of considerable challenges associated with moving to a new building and a legacy of many things that needed to change, the staff and governors have steered the school into a new phase of its development very effectively. They have been able to do this because of a high level of staff commitment and expertise, engendering confidence to take appropriate risks in response to challenges. This excellent track record of change and improvement indicate the school has an outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

The outstanding care, guidance and support that the school provides make a significant contribution to students' outstanding personal development. The four development units, where students of different ages meet together at the beginning and end of each day, form the basis of a very strong pastoral support system. All staff work very well together as a team. Information is collated and shared efficiently and effectively and, as a result, all staff know the students and their families very well. In particular, students' behavioural and emotional needs are exceptionally well catered for. Students who come to the school with very poor behavioural and social skills characteristically leave in Year 11 as mature adolescents, ready to play a positive part in wider society. Similarly, having started with a history of underachievement, they gain as many as nine full GCSE passes and then move on to further education or employment. This demonstrates good progress, made possible not only because of good teaching and a good curriculum, but also because of the positive attitudes to learning of the boys themselves.

The school aims to provide each student with learning experiences that are personalised to their particular needs and interests. This is done well through a broad curriculum and an extensive range of additional curricular activities. However, these individual packages are not always evaluated sufficiently to show how well the curriculum is appropriately covered for each student. Similarly, the way that basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught through other subjects is not always well accounted for in curriculum and lesson plans. Teachers plan lessons that enthuse and motivate students. This has a very positive effect on their behaviour. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and quickly resolved because staff pay particular attention to individual behavioural targets. Sometimes the same attention to detail for students' individual learning targets is not so evident.

The headteacher leads the school very well. He is a significant driving force behind all areas of school development, constantly reflecting on what is going well, what needs to be done and looking for creative ways to increase opportunities. He is very ably supported by a highly committed and experienced senior management team. They know their school well. They have successfully established a well organised and well planned learning environment, where staff and students enjoy mutual respect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the way that the curriculum is evaluated to ensure that personal programmes cover the curriculum as appropriately as possible, and that opportunities to reinforce literacy and numeracy in other subjects are maximised.
- Ensure that teaching is tailored more sharply to students' individual learning targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As expected, in relation to their complex needs, students attain standards of work that are exceptionally below those seen nationally. However, in relation to their low starting points they make good progress. The school tracks students' individual attainment thoroughly and expectations for pupils to succeed are high. Individual targets are appropriately challenging and accelerate progress to make up for previous underachievement. At Key Stage 4, students are expected to take a full range of GCSEs. Since the last inspection, more students are gaining more passes in an increasing range of GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics. Most attain the lower grades but there is an emerging trend for students achieving higher levels. This is preparing them well for life after school. Of the 12 students that left the school in 2007, 11 are still at college or in employment. For those leaving at the end of this term, all have plans to go on to college or work. The pattern of attainment and progress at Key Stage 3 is mixed, affected by prior underachievement and the time taken for some students to settle. Students of all ages acquire particularly good information and communication technology (ICT) skills, enabling them improve the quality of their research and the presentation in other subjects. Generally, students make good progress, including those with unsettled home circumstances. There is a minority of students whose attendance is very poor and, inevitably, they do not achieve as well as those who are settled in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The development of students' personal skills, particularly in relation to behaviour, keeping themselves and one another safe and staying healthy, is outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with particular strengths in students' moral and social awareness. Their spiritual and cultural awareness, while good, is not as well developed in respect to the quality of reflection and appreciation of other ideas, customs and beliefs. Students leave school ready to play a full part in the community having taken advantage of very good opportunities to develop socially acceptable behaviours. When incidents of inappropriate behaviour occur they are short lived because students respond well to positive approaches and because they want to return to class. They greatly enjoy their learning and get on well with one another and with staff. Students' awareness of and responsibility towards keeping themselves and others safe are particularly impressive. This includes their use of the Internet and the use of equipment in design and technology lessons, to name but a few examples. Students respect their environment and take good care of it as shown by the very careful way that ICT and musical equipment is used and is openly accessible. A recent multi-media anti-smoking presentation is a good example of how students not only take health issues seriously but also how they use their learning to help others. In this case, they will take the film to work with local primary school children. Older students are very good role models for younger ones. As they get older, students mature, take increasing responsibility and make long-lasting changes in their behaviour and relationships. Students' attendance is below national averages but nonetheless generally indicates good progress from previously very poor attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff plan lessons exceptionally well to address the behavioural needs of students. This has an excellent impact on students' behaviour because learning is fun, interactive, and appropriate behaviours are reinforced. Lessons always give students opportunities to use ICT, which adds quality to what is being learned and produced. Students want to come to lessons. They start promptly and move at a brisk pace through short activities planned around learning objectives for the subject. Students complete work to a high standard. Some teaching and learning are outstanding, characterised by extended, planned opportunities to foster students' independent thinking skills. Students have individual targets for each subject but these are not always planned for as effectively as those for their behaviour. As a result, opportunities for students to move on in their learning are sometimes missed. Similarly, there is not always enough attention to addressing individual literacy and numeracy targets in other lessons in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides students with an exciting curriculum, delivered in suitably sized chunks with a focus on practical activities. The 'curriculum plus' sessions and ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) programmes give students an element of flexibility and choice to pursue interests, develop talents and improve academic performance. These contribute well to a personalised approach but students' individual programmes are not analysed sufficiently to evaluate the impact on each pupil's overall progress. ICT features highly on the timetable and skills are carefully mapped into other subjects. This is not the case for links between other subjects. In particular, opportunities to extend literacy and numeracy are not always clear in every subject. The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme is well planned, making a significant contribution to students' personal development. For example, excursions to the theatre and national sporting events support social skills and an appreciation of different cultures. There has been no teaching of history in Key Stage 3 for most of this academic year, although plans are in place to cover the subject from September. The school does well to provide students in Key Stage 4 with nine subjects at GCSE level, including two languages. Good facilities and good partnerships with schools, colleges and others, such as the army, place the school in a good position to extend the curriculum further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A significant feature of the school is the way that staff at all levels work with equal respect and responsibility to meet the needs of the students. This provides the students with a seamless provision of care and education throughout the day. The well established, long serving staff team demonstrates great depth in its skills and understanding of students' behavioural and emotional needs. This helps to generate genuine trust between students and staff. The points system works very well to reward appropriate behaviour and to celebrate academic success. Students know what they need to do to achieve academically and socially. Information about students' progress, difficulties and targets is collated methodically into an electronic system, allowing staff instant access to the data. It also enables senior staff to analyse and evaluate

the progress that students make in relation to the support that they receive. Parents and carers are strongly supportive of the school and especially appreciate the quality of communication between home and school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good at all levels. They have secured a smooth transfer to the new building and have shown attention to detail when planning the new facilities. They have not taken their eye off the ball in respect of students' progress and well-being during this period. The school has come a long way on its journey from a period of uncertainty and a legacy of problems. The rate of school improvement since the last inspection is impressive. A previously inadequate curriculum is now good, students' attendance has improved and the PSHCE curriculum has been sufficiently developed to make a good contribution to students' personal development. Procedures to address students' behavioural difficulties were also unsatisfactory and this is clearly not the case now. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour have reduced dramatically. There have been no permanent exclusions for the past two years and periods of fixed term exclusion are greatly reduced. Systems to judge the school's effectiveness have improved, providing a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses through a good range of monitoring activities, including lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and analysis of data. However, the monitoring of the curriculum and students' personal programmes is not yet thorough enough. Nevertheless, the headteacher, governors and a relatively new senior management team provide clear vision, direction and a reflective approach. Previous problems can all be put firmly behind them now and the school can move forward with confidence.

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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?	2
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3
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
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?	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
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	2
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

27 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Goldwyn Community Special School, Ashford, TN23 3BT

This is a short note to say thank you for the help that you gave me when I came to inspect your school recently, and to let you know of my findings. I would urge you to read my full report because it gives much more information about what I saw and what I thought. It is not too long!

I think that Goldwyn is a good school that is well led by your headteacher and his senior management team. The outstanding care, guidance and support that you get from staff help you to make great improvements in your behaviour and learning. The changes in your behaviour are there for all to see and the comments that I received from your families show that they are very pleased too. Please thank them for taking the time to write to me. I am impressed by your behaviour, particularly the way that you learn to accept the consequences when things go wrong or are a bit difficult.

I have asked the staff to reconsider how they check: the way that the school helps you to pursue different interests during 'curriculum plus' time, ASDAN and at other times outside of school. I want them to check that your programmes are helping you to do the best you can. I think that the way your learning targets are used in lessons could be sharper. Your English and mathematics targets could also be used in lessons in other subjects.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to spend time in your school. I wish you well in the future and hope that those of you who have recently taken exams achieve as well as you hoped to.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley Her Majesty's Inspector