

Gartree High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120262
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313570
Inspection date	18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	10–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	774
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phillip Smith
Headteacher	Rosemary Goldberg
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Ridge Way Oadby Leicester LE2 5TQ
Telephone number	0116 2717421
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Age group	10-14
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Introduction

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

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in Key Stage 2, personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching and learning, care, guidance and support, the impact of specialist status and the quality of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; achievement and attainment information; observation of lessons; scrutiny of documentation provided by the school; observation of the school at work; discussion with senior and middle managers; talking to governors and pupils and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but 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 this report.

Description of the school

This is a large middle school, taking pupils from the town of Oadby, the city of Leicester and surrounding villages. It is heavily oversubscribed. The school was awarded specialist status in technology in January 2007 but this was backdated to September 2006. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with the largest group being of Indian heritage. A similar proportion speak English as an additional language, although only a few students are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the average, but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is higher than the national average. The school accommodates the county's unit for hearing impaired pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Gartree is an outstanding school and succeeds in reflecting its vision in 'aspiring to personal excellence in a supportive community'. One pupil summed it up by saying, 'It's a good place to be.' It is an inclusive school where achievement is outstanding. Pupils enter the school in Year 6 with standards which are broadly average and they make outstanding progress by the time they leave school at the end of Year 9. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average, and the exceptionally high standards reached by pupils have been sustained for a number of years. This represents outstanding achievement overall for all pupils and puts the school in the top 1% nationally for progress made between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. When pupils first join the school in Year 6, the school has to prepare them promptly for national tests at the end of the year. Year 6 have a distinct area known as the 'base', which allows them to settle into the school very quickly. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Year 6, and results in the Key Stage 2 national tests are broadly average. The school has worked hard to improve achievement in Year 6 this year by increasing the time in the curriculum for English, mathematics and science. Evidence from school data on pupils' progress indicates this is having some impact and pupils should exceed many targets in Year 6. From Year 7 onwards, pupils' progress accelerates so they attain first-rate results at the end of Year 9.

Gartree is a caring school where every pupil is supported and this leads to the outstanding achievement by pupils. Staff give high importance to the welfare of their pupils, and the quality of pastoral care, support and guidance they provide is outstanding. There are extensive transitional arrangements for pupils joining Year 6 and those leaving at the end of Year 9. The pastoral management team offer a number of very effective interventions to support pupils, such as one to one mentoring sessions and group sessions on areas such as anger management and confidence building. This work is very closely monitored and leads to improved progress in academic subjects, better levels of attendance and a reduction in exclusions. Non-teaching staff lead some aspects of this work. The very careful monitoring of all pupils' academic and personal progress means underachievement is quickly identified and support put in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language receive high quality support and make excellent progress. All requirements for safeguarding the safety and well-being of pupils are met.

Pupils really enjoy school, which is reflected in their high participation in extra-curricular activities and residential trips and their very good attendance. Their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding and promoted very well through 'pause for thought' in assemblies and form time and key activities in the curriculum. The school is a harmonious and multi-cultural community. Diversity is respected and celebrated. Pupils comment that they feel safe, and behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to develop a healthy lifestyle, and take-up for sporting activities is very high. There are also many opportunities for pupils to develop self-esteem and emotional well-being. Pupils take on a range of responsibilities from peer support to involvement in the Gartree against Poverty group. Both of these groups have received Princess Diana awards. The school prepares pupils particularly well for their future lives and the world of work with successful activities such as 'Dragons' Den', where a group of pupils presented a business plan to local business people, to designing a beach house for a local architect's firm.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are polite and work together well. Classrooms are well managed. Learning

intentions are explained clearly at the start of lessons and there is good use of questioning to check pupils' learning and progress. Good use is made of a range of learning activities, encouraging pupils to be independent learners. Teaching assistants are deployed well. There is some inconsistent practice in the quality of comments on marked work, lesson planning and management of pupils' work files in lessons.

The outstanding curriculum is innovative and kept under constant review. Visiting theatre groups, work with established writers and the Poet Laureate enhance the provision. The complementary curriculum has been designed to meet the needs of individual or disaffected pupils by offering a range of short courses such as motorcycle maintenance. An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities reflects the diversity of the school and, as pupils put it, 'They cover all interests.' Specialist technology status is bringing many benefits to pupils and the school. There are some exciting cross-curricular projects in English, science and information and communication technology, such as developing forensic science skills linked to a murder scenario. The technology, science and enterprise club is a popular after-school club. Primary schools have also benefited from the specialism, especially in design and technology and mathematics, to develop textile work and provision for able mathematicians. The school works diligently to develop partnerships with other agencies, schools and colleges to support its pupils and boost opportunities for their learning.

The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher is complemented well by the senior leadership team. Clear direction has ensured that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection and is not complacent. The outstanding success of the school has been its sustained improvement. Despite the immense amount of senior leaders' time taken up by the new build, the school has not lost its key focus of improving the achievement and well-being of pupils. The school consistently sets itself challenging targets. The school has a clear overview of its strengths and areas for improvement. School improvement groups ensure that all staff are involved in planning for the future and each member of staff belongs to one group. Staff share a commitment to continual improvement and this has helped to bring about change. The school thus has an outstanding capacity to improve further. The monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders has improved and they are fully accountable for performance in their areas.

Governors provide outstanding support and challenge to the school and rigorously monitor targets and achievement. They have a very impressive understanding of performance data. Budget difficulties in recent years led to a deficit budget, but this has been managed very effectively by reducing staff. The school is now on course for a balanced budget this year.

Most parents are very supportive of the school, and one parent commented on its strong pastoral system and the 'fantastic job it does in bringing out the full potential of all children who attend'. It justifiably has a good reputation locally. A small minority of parents think that the school needs to listen more to views of pupils and parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure inconsistencies in teaching and learning are addressed by the sharing of best practice.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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

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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	1
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gartree High School, Oadby LE2 5TQ

Thank you for the contributions you made to the school's recent inspection. I enjoyed meeting you, listening to your views and watching you in your lessons. The new building is a lovely environment in which to learn. I was impressed by the positive atmosphere and how well you work and cooperate.

You are right to be proud of your school which I have judged to be outstanding. You make outstanding progress by the end of Year 9, and the results in national tests are exceptionally high. The school helps you do this by the outstanding quality of care, support and guidance it provides. The staff know you well and give high importance to your welfare. Attendance is very good. The school is a harmonious community where you respect each other's cultures. You really enjoy school, feel safe and make excellent contributions to school life, and the local and wider community. Your peer support work and the Gartree against Poverty group impressed me. It is commendable that both of these groups have received Princess Diana awards. The school prepares you extremely well for your future lives and the world of work.

The school offers an extensive range of extra-curricular activities in which many of you take part. Specialist technology status is bringing many benefits to the school and to you. Some exciting projects have been set up, including the one on forensic science. Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The school continues to improve, and senior managers have a clear view of how the school is doing. I have asked the headteacher, the senior management team and the governors to ensure that all your lessons are of a high quality across the school.

The managers, teachers, governors and staff are very committed to their work. I encourage you to continue to support the school and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh

Her Majesty's Inspector