

Greendown Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126467
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	315562
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Clare Gillies

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marcus Walker-Loveridge
Headteacher	Clive Zimmerman
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
School address	Grange Park Way Grange Park Swindon SN5 6HN
Telephone number	01793 874224
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school has a small catchment area – almost half the pupils come from the local ward. It is a teacher-training centre. The school gained specialist status in mathematics and computing and sport in September 2007. The school has Healthy School status, a Sportsmark award and a Quality in Study Support award. The headteacher was appointed in January 2007. The number of pupils entering the school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing. Most of these pupils have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties. A small number of looked after children and refugees attend the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Greendown Community School is a good school. It has several outstanding features. Examples include accurate self-evaluation and planning for the future, a high level of respect for pupils' views and outstanding links with primary schools that benefit pupils of all ages. These features have directly contributed towards improved GCSE results, teaching and learning and the curriculum.

The headteacher and the experienced senior leadership team have sharpened up many aspects of the school's procedures. Their determination to raise standards and to give pupils an excellent preparation for their future lives is clear in everything they do. Specialist status has already benefited the school and the local community in many ways.

On the school's website the headteacher refers to the school's 'energy and vibrancy'. This is partly explained by pupils' good behaviour, enthusiasm and enjoyment of school life and by the lively displays around the school, particularly of artwork. In addition, reflecting the school's specialisms, pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good and, using the very good sports facilities, they keenly participate in the many activities offered in lessons and after school.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of exercise, healthy diet and safe lifestyles. Elements of the curriculum, such as taking ICT and finance qualifications in Year 10, prepare pupils well for adult life. A high percentage of pupils already continue into further education. Senior leaders and governors have imaginative plans to strengthen links with colleges, higher education providers and local businesses to encourage more pupils to continue studying at the highest levels. The good curriculum includes a wide range of options for pupils in Years 10 and 11 but there is a relatively narrow range of work-related learning and alternative courses for those pupils not wishing to follow an academic programme.

The school is committed to the community and the headteacher is proud that the word is in the school's name. In a local residential home, pupils help elderly people to use ICT equipment funded by the school's specialism. Pupils studying catering prepare meals in the community centre. The excellent links with primary schools not only help pupils to settle happily when they join Year 7 but also mean that teachers know what pupils have learned before so that they do not repeat work.

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and teachers' professional development has a high profile. The school is a well-respected teacher-training centre. Examples of outstanding practice exist, for example in teaching styles, marking and feedback, although these are not consistent across the school.

Pupils say that they 'feel comfortable' at school and observe that the rare instances of bullying and racism are taken seriously and sorted quickly. Pupils' moral and social development is very good and they have a sound appreciation of spiritual and cultural issues, particularly when teachers discuss topical issues during tutor times. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is delivered by tutors and the quality of these lessons and tutor time is too variable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Promote the highest standards and achievement by spreading good teaching practice, especially in teachers' written feedback on how pupils could improve their work.

- Ensure that all teachers use the morning tutor sessions productively and that they prepare their personal, social, health and citizenship lessons carefully.
- Expand the options for pupils who wish to follow vocational routes in Years 10 and 11.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although standards on entry are average, the school has a relatively small proportion of higher ability pupils and an increasing number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Since the previous inspection, the trend in national test and GCSE results has been upward. Pupils are currently achieving well, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Year 9 pupils attained average standards in 2007 and this year's pupils are on course to do the same.

The school predicts, and this is confirmed by monitoring data on standards, that about half the pupils will attain five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2008. Mathematics, one of the school's specialisms, is on course to produce much better GCSE results in 2008. In 2007, sports, another specialism, attained an above average percentage of GCSE A*/A grades. Other subjects that achieve good results include business studies, geography, religious education, music, French and Spanish.

The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve very well. In 2007, girls did not do as well as boys in GCSEs but the school has tackled this and there is no evidence that this will happen in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils learn to appreciate other cultures and diversity by studying six major faiths in religious education. This contributes satisfactorily to their spiritual development, even though they only attend one assembly a week. Topics in citizenship and the school's link with a South African school also develop these elements of their personal development. The school has a strong sense of community and puts into practice its key motto 'Think of the other person'. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, are sociable, welcoming to visitors and proud of their school. Most of them thoroughly enjoy school life and behave well. Attendance is average but improving.

In addition to contributing to the effective school council, pupils complete questionnaires and contribute to the senior leadership's monitoring by discussing, for example, how helpful they find their teachers' marking. Older pupils help younger ones with reading and organisation. As well as teachers, many pupils visit primary schools and help them with a variety of activities. An Eco group flourishes and minority ethnic pupils contribute to a local authority forum on racial issues.

Pupils take lots of exercise and eat healthily. Vending machines now contain only healthy food – a change supported by the school council. Pupils learn how to lead safe lives through the personal, social and health programme, supported by speakers from outside organisations. The school has an excellent relationship with the local police, members of whom enjoy playing football with pupils during lunchtime. A five-a-side league is starting for community groups. Links with businesses help pupils with their understanding of the world of work, such as Year 9 engineering days.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

On the school's website a pupil is quoted as saying 'You're learning loads but it's fun' and a parent observed that 'staff are enthusiastic'. Lessons are characterised by very good relationships and pupils being keen to learn and succeed. Several non-teaching staff, such as the library staff, learning support assistants and instructors, contribute much to pupils' learning well.

Many lessons get off to a fast start and most pupils know what they are learning and why, and can recognise what success looks like. Teachers often include a variety of practical, visual, reading and writing activities and use interactive whiteboards well to stimulate learning. This year, the school has focused on marking, especially constructive comments. Some teachers do this extremely well whilst others either celebrate good points without suggesting ways to improve or just provide ticks. Pupils are clear about the levels and grades they should be aiming for and in the main know how well they are doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

To strengthen the curriculum, new initiatives such as philosophy for children or social and emotional learning are trialled and evaluated carefully. Different 'pathways' and subject options let pupils choose courses that match their interests and aspirations. Year 9 pupils have been stimulated to learn a new language by the novelty of being taught separately – Italian for boys and Spanish for girls.

The majority of pupils follow GCSE or applied learning pathways with a small but increasing number following a fairly limited range of work-related and vocational courses. The school is mindful of local job opportunities when planning its curriculum. Specialist status has resulted in better resources in mathematics and ICT and outstanding provision in sport. In all specialist subjects, the range of courses is widening, for example the new 'iMedia' media qualification, functional skills or Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) sport. Exciting productions are staged but music lessons rarely include singing and few pupils are involved in regular, extra-curricular music groups.

The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those with English as an additional language or refugees are met well by sensitive adjustments to their personal curriculum. Pupils with behavioural difficulties receive very good support. Provision for gifted and talented pupils includes a good range of stimulating activities which help them to achieve well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has very good child protection arrangements. Procedures for safeguarding children meet government requirements although inspectors raised issues about a lack of attention to detail in record keeping. The school made the necessary adjustments immediately.

The high profile given to pupils' and parents' welfare and equal opportunities for all is seen in the warm welcome in the reception areas, the appointment of an Every Child Matters coordinator and the introduction of a 'respect and relationship' programme. Pupils understand the rewards

system and feel it is fair; a parent noted that her child enjoys 'the spirit of reasonable competition'.

The good careers guidance for pupils starts in Year 8, along with regular reviews of targets and support from businesses and advisory services. The school gives well-considered support to those pupils with learning needs, particularly those experiencing behavioural difficulties. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly but pupils' targets are too general and long term for easy monitoring.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A parent wrote, 'I am very impressed with how Greendown has come on over the years.' The headteacher has generated significant improvements, particularly in results and achievement. He has been quite clear about what needed to be done to move the school forward and his actions continue to be well planned and effective. The specialisms have brought with them a further strengthening of the efficient senior leadership team. They have also brought significant additional resources to the school, and these have been exceptionally well used to improve provision and support for the pupils. Senior and middle leaders regularly monitor, in depth, the quality of marking, lesson planning and pupils' behaviour. The outcomes of these reviews contribute towards changes to raise standards. Subject leaders know they are accountable for pupils' performance but, with staff morale at a high level, reviews are undertaken in a spirit of cooperation and support.

Teachers appreciate their high quality professional development. This, combined with the school's role as a teacher-training centre and much valuable advice from the local authority, explains why staff are reflective and keen to develop their practice. The school wrote its own software programme for collating and analysing data about all elements of pupils' performance. This works very well so subject leaders, teachers and tutors can quickly find the information they need to guide individual pupils and groups. Parents appreciate being able to contact the school by email and the great majority have much confidence in the education provided.

The governing body brings a helpful range of expertise to its work and receives much useful information on which to base its questions, comments and advice. With experience of effective improvement in the past and the significant impact of specialist status in just one year, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further. Indeed, its development plan is titled 'From good to outstanding'.

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
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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	3
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?	2
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	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
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	1
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	1
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

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Greendown Community School, Swindon, SN5 6HN

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing all the positive things you had to say. It is always a pleasure to meet pupils who enjoy school, feel safe and happy, say they are taught well and know that their views are valued. We agree with all you said and have described Greendown Community School as a good school with several excellent features.

It is clear that specialist status has already made a difference. You appreciate your excellent sporting facilities and take lots of exercise, which is great. You also value the updated computers and other new equipment. What also impressed us was your good behaviour and that you want to learn and do well. GCSE results have gone up in recent years so you have a challenge ahead to do even better. Some of you already take vocational options in Years 10 and 11 but the school knows, and we agree, that it could broaden the work-related choices and courses you have.

Your school is committed to the local community. The excellent links with primary schools not only help you to settle happily in Greendown Community School but also mean that teachers know what you have learned before so they do not repeat work in Year 7.

Behind all these good things is Mr Zimmerman, his leadership team and the enthusiastic and caring teachers and other staff. Their determination to raise standards further and to prepare you well for your future lives is clear in everything that they do. For example, they know that some teaching and marking are particularly good, so they are happy that we have suggested that they share this good practice amongst all staff. Another thing we noticed is that some of your teachers use the tutor time in the mornings, to teach your personal, social, health and citizenship lessons, more enthusiastically than others, so we have asked the school to look at this carefully.

My colleagues and I hope that you have done as well as possible in all your tests and examinations this term and that you will have successful and happy futures.

Yours sincerely

Clare Gillies Lead inspector

Annex B

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