

# Greenbank School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111503
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	337693
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Brian Padgett HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.  
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	98
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Mary Hyde
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Christine Brennan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Greenbank Lane Hartford Northwich CW8 1LD
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<b>Age group</b>	6–18
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<b>Boarding provision</b>	Greenbank Residential School
<b>Social care Unique Reference Number</b>	SC006624
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Norma Welsby

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## Introduction

This integrated inspection of the school and the residential provision was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, two additional inspectors and an inspector of social care. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and activities in the boarding provision, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and carers, and representatives of external agencies. They observed the school's work, scrutinised documentation and data provided by the school and examined 48 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work, including the work within the residential provision. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the school in meeting the very diverse needs of the students
- how well the curriculum motivates students to learn
- how well teaching meets students' individual needs
- how effectively the school works with parents and carers, and other agencies to promote students' learning and well-being.

## Information about the school

The school is a day and residential school for young people of secondary school age. It is situated on a large education campus with other schools on the outskirts of Northwich. The school caters for students with moderate and severe learning disabilities. More than half of the students have been identified as having autistic spectrum condition. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Three students are looked after by the local authority. Currently, 33 of the students are taught in the sixth form and 52 students are registered with the 22-place residential accommodation, which is open during term time. Students attend the school from all over Cheshire and are from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds. Nearly all are of White British heritage. Around a quarter of students are girls.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

This is a good school. It has several outstanding features. Since the last inspection the school has had many changes to staff and admits an increasing proportion of students on the autistic spectrum, who have challenging behaviour and communication difficulties, as well as significant learning difficulties. Through good leadership and management and the wholehearted commitment of all staff, including those who work in the residential provision, it is meeting the needs of students well.

Outcomes for students are outstanding, overall. They make good academic progress. Teaching is good and in some lessons, especially in the autistic spectrum condition department, it is outstanding. The curriculum is exciting and enhanced by extended opportunities in residential provision. Parents and carers see younger children settle very well and notice huge improvements in their confidence when they join the school. Many older students achieve accreditations and entry level qualifications that demonstrate good academic progress and outstanding progress in the skills they need to live fulfilling lives. Increasing numbers of students stay on to sixth form and most move onto college. A small minority of the most-able students achieve GCSEs alongside their peers in mainstream school. The school is most effective in promoting students' personal development and well-being. Students really enjoy school; their behaviour is exemplary and they develop in confidence and independence. They exercise their 'voice' to make an outstanding contribution to the school community and increasingly make an impact on the wider community. The school is calm and harmonious. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and staff know and understand the needs of students exceptionally well. Students feel very safe and well cared for. The school has close and effective links with external agencies and partners to ensure health, well-being and good prospects for students. There remain opportunities for further improvement. The leadership team is increasingly successful but it does not yet rigorously analyse whole-school performance effectively to determine future priorities. The governing body is very supportive but is not yet challenging the leadership team fully, as can be seen in the shortfalls in its duty to promote community cohesion.

The school receives significant levels of public funding but through its high-quality service to young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities it provides excellent value for money. The headteacher and senior staff are keen to improve further. They have achieved improvement through a period of significant change and demonstrate good capacity for further improvement.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve the analysis of whole-school performance in order to identify where improvement is needed, and take appropriate action.
- Develop and implement plans to promote community cohesion and evaluate the impact of the actions taken.
- Further improve the leadership and management of the school through increasing the rigour of the work of the governing body.
- Ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for boarding that have not been met.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Students make good academic progress from a very wide range of starting points. Many receive external accreditation for their achievements and most go on to complete entry level qualifications. A small minority of the most-able students go on to achieve GCSEs, which they prepare for in the adjacent secondary school, supported by teaching assistants from their school. Students make outstanding progress in aspects of their personal development, particularly in their social development, confidence and independence. Students with autistic spectrum condition make enormous strides, relative to their starting points, in their ability to communicate and interact with others and to take on new challenges.

Students new to the school settle very well. Parents and carers remark on the positive differences they see in their children. The behaviour of students is exemplary, whether in lessons or around the school at break or lunchtimes. For many this represents outstanding achievement because managing their behaviour is often a major challenge for them. The school is a very harmonious place, where students get on with each other, showing respect, tolerance and patience to each other. Part of the explanation for their excellent behaviour is how well students enjoy school and feel safe throughout, including those who stay overnight in the residential accommodation. Students have very positive attitudes to learning and are making excellent progress in developing the skills they will need in later life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching is effective across the very wide range of ability and disability found in the school. There is some outstanding teaching. At the heart of teachers' success with students is their knowledge and concern for each student: staff have excellent relationships with students and are committed to their progress and well-being. Teachers are expert in teaching students with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties, especially in the department for students with autistic spectrum condition. Teaching assistants play a central role in the learning of students. They show great skill in their work, although, on occasions, too much is done for students. Teachers assess students' progress well and generally use this knowledge effectively to plan the next steps in learning.

The curriculum is exciting and varied. The National Curriculum is provided, with an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills that students need in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. At present, these skills are not sufficiently interwoven with other subjects and activities. The school has notable expertise in science, physical education and the creative arts. This broadens students' achievement and enjoyment of school. Every opportunity is taken to take students out into the community for learning and to bring the community into school. Preparation for the world of work is a major part of the curriculum for the older students and a major strength of the curriculum. For those students who board, in particular, the extra-curricular activities and topics followed in the evenings support the school's curriculum well. For day students there are many opportunities to engage in sporting activities over lunchtime.

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The care, guidance and support students receive from all staff is unstinting. The balance between providing students with opportunities to take risks in a controlled environment with the need to protect the many extremely vulnerable students is exceptionally well managed. Staff know their students extremely well. Their levels of communication and engagement with external services also involved with students are of the highest order.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has managed changes to staff and to the changing needs of students very well. She provides a strong sense of direction and models the school's values very effectively. These values are shared by senior staff and are responsible for the excellent ethos of the school. The school's procedures to safeguard students are of good quality, as are its procedures to promote equality and tackle discrimination. New staff settle quickly and are already making a good contribution to the quality of the provision because of the good leadership and effective management of the headteacher and senior staff. Senior managers and subject managers are making an increasingly positive impact in strengthening leadership and management at all levels. The school's self-evaluation is generally of good quality. Nevertheless, the school does not analyse its performance as well as it might, using available data to identify subjects and aspects that might be improved further. Governors are diligent and supportive of the school but are not sufficiently proactive in driving the school forward and meeting new obligations, relying, at times, a little too much on the headteacher. Although the school is a very harmonious community, the wider implications of community cohesion have not yet received the attention they require. The school's partnership with parents and carers, and with other agencies is outstanding. Parents and carers, and external partners hold the school and its senior staff in the highest regard and work together exceptionally effectively; for example, in providing students with work experience. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and what their children achieve, although one or two parents and carers of the most-able students would like to see their children attain higher qualifications than at present.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Sixth form

The number of students staying on into the sixth form has increased significantly since the last inspection, a measure of the success students enjoy in developing further the skills they need for life after school and in gaining accreditations and qualifications. The increasingly wide range of student abilities and disabilities is catered for well. Most go on to college placements. Very close working with agencies involved in securing work placements for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very effective in introducing students to the world of work. The excellent work in promoting students' confidence and independence in the mainstream school is continued in the sixth form. Students develop a strong sense of their rights and responsibilities. Enterprise is cultivated well, as demonstrated in a very effective presentation by sixth formers to the school in an assembly during the inspection. The leadership of the sixth form is of outstanding quality in its vision and in the management of the timetable

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Boarding provision



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The quality of boarding is good. There are also some outstanding features, including the quality of relationships that exist between boarders and staff and the extent to which students are consulted and involved in the development and shaping of the residential service. The boarding provision clearly provides invaluable support to individuals and the school as a whole.

The service promotes the health of the students to a good standard. Appropriate arrangements are in place to access health care support and students are encouraged to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. Each student's health care needs are fully assessed at the referral stage and every one has a detailed health care plan. Staff receive appropriate training in health-related areas, such as epilepsy and first aid. The management and administration of medication is satisfactory, with staff receiving ongoing training from the school nurse. Staff continue to encourage older boarders to take some responsibility for self-administration. The quality, variety and sufficiency of food provided for boarders is good. Students demonstrate a good awareness of the importance of healthy eating. Healthy snacks are provided, such as fresh fruit and yogurt, and there is always access to drinking water. Boarders have opportunities to develop their catering skills and to make links between theory and practice, for example in relation to health and safety in the kitchen.

The service has extensive policies and procedures in place to promote the safety of boarders. Staff are committed to providing a safe and secure residential experience and this is recognised and appreciated by boarders, and parents and carers. Residential staff and boarders enjoy quality relationships and an open rapport. Boarders feel that staff look after them well and also feel safe. Furthermore, they feel they are supported to enjoy a good range of activities that are meaningful and take due account of their needs and safety. Detailed risk assessments are in place for each boarder and these are synchronised with school risk assessments. Students know how to complain and are confident that staff will listen carefully to them and respond positively. The school's child protection policy is comprehensive and is regularly reviewed. Staff receive ongoing refresher training and know what to do in the event of any child protection concerns. The service also has a policy on countering bullying and staff and students are confident that any bullying issues are responded to quickly. A very positive approach is taken to promoting acceptable behaviour and is testimony to the mutual respect that exists between staff and boarders. Physical intervention is used only as a last resort and no restraints have been used since the last social care key inspection in October 2008. Staff training in this area has not been provided in recent years and, as a consequence, the safety of staff and boarders is compromised. The school follows safer recruitment procedures, ensuring that all staff are fully vetted before being allowed to work with children and young people. Following a recommendation at the previous key inspection this now includes verification of each written reference.

The exceptional relationships that students and staff enjoy significantly contributes to the highly effective and individualised care that boarders receive. They have many and varied opportunities to participate in an excellent range of purposeful and enjoyable activities, both in school and in the community, such as sport, drama and residential

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committee meetings. Staff also provide opportunities for boarders to consolidate and extend their academic work and life skills, for example in numeracy, communication and socialisation. Such opportunities lead to significant personal development, which is well documented in individual care plans. However, specific individual targets identified in school, and the contribution residential staff make to enabling boarders achieve these, are not always clearly evidenced in residential records. Boarders are regularly consulted, using a diversity of methods, and are fully involved in how the service develops. For example, some students have been very involved in securing funding to make improvements to the residential facilities. Each student has an individual care plan. Parents and carers are closely involved and there are effective arrangements in place to encourage ongoing reciprocal communication, including contact between students, and parents and carers during overnight stays.

The accommodation provided in the residential units has improved significantly during recent years and plans for further improvements are in place to ensure that national minimum standards are fully met. The residential provision has significantly improved the recreational space and facilities during the past year and boarders are proud of these improvements and benefit greatly from them. Detailed transitional information which explicitly reflects the assessed individual needs and targets of all older boarders and which complements the educational transition plan is not clearly evidenced in residential records.

This residential service is exceptionally well managed. The management ethos is open, inclusive and progressive. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are highly motivated and skilled to support boarders and enable them to have a positive experience while staying away from home. The statement of purpose is comprehensive and regularly reviewed to reflect the aims and objectives of the service. There is a good staffing structure, providing clear lines of accountability and there is always an identified senior person on duty. Staffing ratios are good and are arranged flexibly to meet the changing needs of boarders. More than 80% of staff have achieved NVQ level 3 in the care of children and young people and many remaining staff are undertaking such training. This means that boarders benefit from the expertise of a well-qualified team. Regular supervision, team meetings and annual appraisals are in place. Staff also benefit from induction and ongoing refresher training and feel well supported.

**National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care**

- Include detailed transitional information within care plans which explicitly reflects the assessed individual needs and targets of all boarders and which complements the educational transition plan (NMS 21).
- Provide all staff with appropriate training in physical intervention techniques (NMS 10 and 29 Appendix 2).
- Ensure that quality monitoring visits by the governing body are completed every half term and a written report provided following each visit (NMS 33).
- Ensure that specific individual targets identified in school and the contribution residential staff make to enabling boarders achieve these are clearly evidenced in

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residential records (NMS 12).

*This is the grade for the boarding provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the boarding provision</b>	<b>2</b>
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## **Views of parents and carers**

Nearly half of the school's parents and carers responded in the questionnaires. There was a high degree of satisfaction among parents and carers, with 96% feeling that overall, they were happy with their children's experience of school. Some parents and carers gave testimony to the life-changing improvements in the confidence of their children since attending the school. One issue was the subject of some concern to a small number of parents and carers who shared their concerns with inspectors: whether the most-able students are enabled to attain their full potential in the GCSE examinations. Inspectors were persuaded that current arrangements with the local high school are appropriate. However, the school was asked to explore all options to ensure that students achieve the highest qualifications they can in a context that is meaningful to all concerned.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Greenbank School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	65	28	30	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	67	32	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	52	46	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	44	44	46	6	6	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	54	57	38	40	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	51	42	44	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	44	50	52	4	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	48	52	42	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	62	30	32	2	2	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	55	42	44	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	44	48	50	4	4	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	52	54	40	42	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	67	28	29	4	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



Inspection of Greenbank School, Northwich, CW8 1LD

You may remember I visited Greenbank recently with a team of inspectors. I am writing to you to tell you how we judged your school. First, I would like to say thank you to all of you and the staff, on behalf of the inspection team, for making our two days at Greenbank so memorable and for making us feel so welcome.

We judge your school to be a good school that does some things exceptionally well. You can be proud of your school, as we know you are, and your parents and carers can be pleased you go to a school where you learn well and where you are looked after with exceptional care. We saw some good teaching and saw that with support you made really good progress from when you began at Greenbank. We thought you were developing very well to become fine young people who are confident and becoming independent. For example, your behaviour in school was as good as in the best schools. The work you do is interesting and you have many opportunities to learn outside of school. Mrs Welsby looked at the residential part of the school where many of you stay and she judged that this part of school was also good and did some things outstandingly well.

We felt there were a few things the school could do better. For example, there are things Mrs Brennan can do with senior staff to make better plans for the future. The governors can do some things to improve too, such as making sure the school meets all the requirements to promote harmony and understanding in the community. We felt confident in the school's ability to get better. You will be involved in any improvement plans. Keep telling staff what you think you need and what you can do to help.

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