

Garston Manor School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117667
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339042
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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 of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Tozer
Headteacher	Mrs J Loman
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with a governor, staff, and a group of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data on students' performance, the school improvement plan and a range of policies as well as 30 parental questionnaires.

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

- The use of student performance data to plan work that is matched to students' capabilities and learning needs
- The extent to which provision in Key Stage 4 and transition arrangements prepare students for leaving school
- The effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching in improving learning
- The extent to which strong leadership and management is embedded and driving improvement.

Information about the school

The school provides for students with a statement of special educational needs for moderate learning difficulties. A number have additional needs mainly related to autism and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The majority of students are White British and all students speak English as their first language.

Garston Manor is part of the Adrian Extended Schools Consortium sharing resources and expertise with neighbouring primary and secondary schools. It is a hub school for the Three Rivers Sports Partnership. The school has achieved the SportsMark, the Healthy Schools Award, the Basic Skills Award, Investors in People and Financial Management Standards in Schools.

Since the last inspection, a deputy headteacher and leaders for English, information and communication technology, physical education and mathematics have been appointed. The senior management team roles were restructured in September 2009 and an additional member added to the team.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school is satisfactory in its effectiveness. Some areas of its performance are good, particularly in relation to the care, guidance and support for students which leads to positive outcomes in their personal development. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Each element is well provided through the curriculum, assemblies, the school's positive ethos and the enjoyment students find in learning. The good curriculum provides a breadth of learning opportunities which contribute effectively to students' engagement in work, their outgoing nature and confidence to tackle challenging activities. They join enthusiastically in after-school clubs and sports, the latter of which is strengthened by the school's involvement in the Three Rivers Sports Partnership. Good partnerships with schools in the consortium contribute to staff training, learning resources and, in particular, the opportunity to compare assessment data. The school maintains close links with parents and carers, providing a good range of support.

Teaching and the use of assessment to support learning are satisfactory, although the quality of lessons varies greatly. Of the lessons observed, some were outstanding, most were good or satisfactory but a few were inadequate. The understanding and use of data about student performance at classroom level provides a mixed picture, but data are used extremely effectively in a few instances. Learning and progress mirror this varied picture with the result that achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory overall. However, by the end of Key Stage 4, the great majority of students have gained some accreditation and a good proportion leave with one or more passes at GCSE level. For some this represents a good achievement although, overall, students are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

Students' behaviour is satisfactory. It was observed to be good around school but occasionally was inadequate in lessons. A few parents and carers and students raised concerns about behaviour, although when asked, students felt bullying is dealt with effectively by staff. There is some lack of consistency in how staff exercise discipline and the behaviour policy does not sufficiently encourage good behaviour, all of which reduces the impact of the school's approach to behaviour management.

School improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory with most headway made on the curriculum with sound progress in improving teaching and the development and use of tracking data. The capacity to sustain improvement is satisfactory. Self-evaluation is accurate; this helps leaders to identify the key development priorities. It has not been effective in completely eliminating inadequate teaching even though lessons are monitored regularly. This is because leaders' observations of teaching are not sharply focused on identifying precisely what needs to improve to make learning consistently

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effective.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - evaluating lessons with a sharp focus on what works well, or otherwise, to inform actions that will promote learning
 - ensuring every teacher plans their lessons thoroughly using assessment effectively to identify clear learning objectives and success criteria
 - Improve behaviour by:
 - _ writing and implementing an effective behaviour policy that guides staff to encourage good behaviour at all times
 - Build on the start made to develop the use of students' performance data by:
 - _ training leaders and teachers in the analysis and use of data to plan lessons and to set challenging targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The rate at which students make progress across the school is uneven so that at times, and in different subjects, it is good but otherwise satisfactory and sometimes inadequate. This reflects differences in the effectiveness with which teaching promotes learning. In particular, the degree of skill and the amount of care taken in using assessment and data on students' performance are inconsistent when teachers plan work for all students. Progress slows down because some work is not engaging and challenging enough. However, students are often challenged well in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and art. Each year, mainly in these subjects, about half of Year 11 students leave with one or more GCSE passes and the large majority gain Entry Level Certificates. Students enjoy school and, overall, they achieve satisfactorily. The majority meet or exceed targets based on the amount of progress they are predicted to make. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys or girls, or by minority ethnic students.

Students feel safe and, although they point to some bullying taking place and the very occasional racist remark, they are confident to report incidents. The large majority are assured that staff deal with these effectively. Students give good consideration to healthy lifestyles, in particular by staying physically active through sports and other activities. While most students think behaviour is good, and it was often seen to be good around the school, in a few lessons the behaviour of some affected adversely the learning of others.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In good and better lessons, students' learning difficulties and other needs are well understood and taken fully into consideration when staff plan learning objectives and set success criteria to assess outcomes. Here, detailed knowledge of students and the use of the school's data about their performance play a significant part in planning work that is closely matched to students' different capabilities. Sharply focused help from teachers and their assistants and lively approaches encourage students' engagement and enjoyment. This leaves no problems in managing students' behaviour. Not all teachers have such a refined understanding of what makes lesson planning effective in promoting learning and ensuring good behaviour. In the few inadequate lessons in particular, there was a lack of clarity in what students were to learn and a mismatch between the work set and students' capabilities.

The curriculum has benefitted considerably from the clear direction set by leaders, giving careful thought and effort to making work and activities interesting and relevant to students' needs providing them with a good breadth of learning opportunities. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has a mainstream secondary school flavour, with subject options and a good balance of vocational and academic study supported by a good range of accreditation to suit all capabilities. Students' enjoyment is increased by sports, clubs and trips away from school.

All of the staff have a deep concern for the welfare and of every student, which counts

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

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considerably towards eliminating any possibility of discrimination and to every student gaining self-confidence and self-esteem. Safeguarding policies and procedures are good. Strong links with external agencies ensure the school is active in helping students and their families. Attendance has improved as a result and is now in line with the national average. Similarly, these links, together with the work of the school, provide good support to students in preparing to leave school at 16.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership has been effective in moving the school forward in some respects such as the good progress in improving the curriculum. Here, especially, the school has been effective in promoting equality of opportunity. There has been satisfactory progress in improving teaching and the use of assessment in particular. Through sound self-evaluation, leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and lessons in particular. However, this has not given sufficient impetus to improving the consistency of the teaching. There is clear direction on the way forward for the school, reflected well in the restructuring of the senior management team, the development of leadership across the school and the common purpose all staff share concerning caring for students and school improvement. The governing body fulfils its duties satisfactorily; it has several new members who, while settling into their roles, demonstrate the abilities and experience to enhance leadership and challenge the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

<p>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</p>	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A minority returned questionnaires and of these the large majority are pleased with the school and how it is benefitting their children. All believe their children are kept safe and nearly all think the school helps their children have a healthy lifestyle. While many consider teaching is good and that they are given help to support their children's learning at home, some do not agree this is the case. Most parents who responded are happy with their children's experience at school, a few disagreed with some having concerns about behaviour. The inspection team also found some behaviour to be unacceptable in lessons and this is reflected in one of the areas for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Garston Manor 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	30	17	57	3	10	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	14	47	16	53	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	5	17	20	67	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	10	21	70	4	13	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	8	27	18	60	4	13	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	20	20	67	3	10	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	27	18	60	2	7	1	3
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)	7	23	17	57	2	7	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	7	23	77	2	7	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	27	16	53	2	7	2	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	13	19	63	4	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	20	18	60	2	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	36	8	36	5	23	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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



07 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Garston Manor School, Watford WD25 7HR

Many thanks for your warm welcome, friendliness and help during our recent visit to your school. I also want to thank the group of students who gave up their time to meet and share their views of school with an inspector.

As a result of the visit, it was decided your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Inspectors found many good things to say about your school, not least that you enjoy every day there. Staff care for you well and give you good support. This helps you to grow into well rounded individuals, soundly prepared for leaving school. You are kept safe and have good opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles.

The range and choices of activities in school are good, especially by the time you reach Years 10 and 11, when you begin learning about the world of work, further education, careers and achieve success on examination courses. Inspectors saw much good behaviour around school, but it could have been better in a few of the lessons. Many of the lessons we observed were good or outstanding and a few needed significant improvements in order that your progress becomes good rather than satisfactory.

Inspectors found some things the headteacher, staff and governors could improve.

These are:

To make sure all of your lessons are planned well, based on a good knowledge of what you can do and what you need to learn next

To develop ways of encouraging all students to behave well every day

To help teachers become more expert in using the information about your progress to plan their lessons and set challenging targets for you to achieve.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Alan Lemon

Lead Inspector

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