

Greenbank High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104955
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	355668
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Angela Milner HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	845
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Heather Shulver
Headteacher	Mrs Pat McQuade
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons and 36 teachers were observed. A joint observation of a lesson was conducted with an assistant headteacher. Meetings were held with staff, students, parents, external partners, representatives of the governing body and the local authority. Inspectors looked at the school's work, students' books and a range of documentation including: improvement planning, monitoring information and the school's assessment and tracking systems. Inspectors scrutinised 512 questionnaires from parents and carers, 154 from students and 57 from staff.

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

- The current achievement of different groups of students in art and French and for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals in English and mathematics.
- Improvements made to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection.
- The quality of care, guidance and support provided to help students reach their potential.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers, at all levels, including governors in improving students' outcomes.

Information about the school

Greenbank High School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. It is the only girls' school in Sefton local authority. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are low. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of students known to be entitled to a free school meal is also below the national average. The school has held specialist status in languages since 1998. The school has achieved the International Schools Award, the Silver Eco Award and the Artsmark Silver Award. It holds Healthy Schools, Extended Schools and Investors in People status.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Greenbank High School provides its students with an outstanding education and very high quality care, guidance and support. Staff work as part of an effective team to identify, nurture and develop the potential of each student. Students say they enjoy school and participate fully in the extensive range of opportunities it provides. As one student said: 'There are just so many opportunities, you can do so much here'. Students have a clear sense of belonging to the school community and willingly make a very significant contribution to the wider community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a substantial strength of the school. As a result, students become mature, self-confident individuals with high aspirations. They are extremely well prepared for life beyond school. Their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.

Most groups of students now make good progress in their learning, and attainment remains above average. The quality of teaching is good overall, but is variable. The school has worked hard and effectively to increase the proportion of good or better teaching since the last inspection. Where lessons are less successful, teachers do not take sufficient account of assessment information. As a result, they do not plan appropriately challenging work to meet the needs of all students in the class and this slows the rates of progress some students make in their learning.

The school's specialist status in languages is flourishing and the quality of students' learning has been enriched by the facilities and opportunities this affords. The management of this aspect of the school's work is excellent. Students speak with enthusiasm about their increased levels of confidence and the skills they have gained from being involved in language-related activities. The excellent curriculum and outstanding partnership arrangements are also linked strongly to initiatives relating to the school's specialist status.

The school has good capacity to improve. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school, including the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Improvement plans are well focused. Since the last inspection, there have been clear improvements in the care, guidance and support offered and in the curriculum, both of which are now outstanding. Senior leaders have successfully embedded a culture of improvement. However, the monitoring and review of the impact of initiatives by middle leaders is not yet systematically embedded in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers consistently make effective use of assessment information to provide activities which meet the precise learning needs of all students.

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- Ensure that middle leaders monitor and review the impact of initiatives more systematically.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

From above average starting points, students' achievement is good overall. Over the past three years attainment has remained well above the national average and achievement has increased significantly. Unvalidated results for 2010 indicate this trend continues with 69% of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. Most students make good progress in their lessons and achieve well. Students learn at a good rate because of their excellent attitudes to work and the impressive curriculum. Lesson observations and the school's monitoring data show that the school has successfully raised achievement in English and for more-able students since the last inspection. Too few students attain the highest grades in art and French but this is being remedied as a result of the school's focus on these areas. This contributes to attainment being above average overall but is high in many other subjects. In addition, the school is providing effective extra support for students known to be eligible for free school meals in English and mathematics. The small proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as others. This is because they are well motivated and engaged in their learning and are provided with very good provision and support.

Students say they are clear about how to keep themselves and others safe and are confident that the few incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively by staff. They are very caring of each other. One example of this is the well established 'ANGELS' mentoring programme, whereby Year 10 students effectively support students in Year 7. Behaviour in the social areas, at break and lunchtimes, as well as in lessons is excellent. Significant improvements have taken place as a result of recently introduced and very clear systems and expectations for behaviour. Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles as can be seen from their high rates of participation in sporting activities and their ability to discuss what constitutes healthy eating. Students make a very positive contribution to the life of the school in their roles as members of the school council and school leadership group. They are involved in a range of community and leadership activities in local primary schools and charitable activities within and beyond the school. This includes raising money to support a school in Ghana. Students' preparation for their future lives is extremely well developed through their high levels of skills in basic literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology and the enterprise and work-related learning they undertake. Attendance rates are high. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, fostered through an effective assembly programme, religious and personal, social and health education lessons is excellent.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are good. The focus on more systematic lesson observation, coupled with the encouragement to share good practice across the school, is stimulating better teaching and helping to improve students' achievement. The very large majority of lessons observed by inspectors were good or better. The quality of planning activities to challenge students of differing abilities is, however, variable. Inspectors observed a number of outstanding lessons. Here, teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan activities which motivate and challenge students and meet their precise learning needs. Teachers use their subject expertise and skilful questioning to ensure that students are effectively challenged. As a result, students make excellent progress in their learning. When teaching lacks this focus, or students are not challenged appropriately with work matched to their needs, then the pace of learning slows. The school is aware of the need to improve teachers' use of assessment information to enhance students' learning. Students are, however, encouraged to assess their own and other students' work and learn how to improve it further.

The curriculum is outstanding as recognised by a number of awards including the International Schools Award. It is kept under constant review to ensure that it meets the full range of aspirations of all students and is continually enhanced. One example of this is the opportunity for all pupils to study additional languages such as Russian and Mandarin Chinese and German. The curriculum allows all students to participate, achieve success

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and enjoy their learning. For example, the school's web-based learning portal is being effectively used, in conjunction with the local Education and Business Partnership, to ensure disaffected students at Key Stage 4 can access an alternative curriculum and complete appropriate qualifications. There is a strong international and global dimension to the curriculum. The associated trips, visits and visitors are frequent additions to the curriculum. They enhance learning by providing students with particularly memorable experiences. Regular enrichment days provide valuable additional opportunities for students to explore topical issues and develop a range of life skills. The school provides students with an impressive range of enrichment and educational activities beyond the normal school day. High participation rates indicate that these activities are enjoyed and appreciated.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support is reflected in the positive relationships that exist between staff and students and the very strong sense of community in the school. These relationships motivate students to want to learn and contribute to the positive and nurturing ethos within the school. Highly effective transition arrangements enable new students to settle quickly into school. Students know who to turn to if they need support. Progress leaders and the learning mentor carefully monitor and deal with any concerns students may have. They provide excellent links to a range of relevant external support agencies when necessary. Strong support systems for students' welfare have been enhanced since the last inspection. There is a greater focus on the provision of effective academic guidance. The progress of all students is carefully and regularly monitored. Any underachievement is swiftly identified and tackled. Students meet regularly with staff to review their progress. Consequently, students know the levels they are working at, what their targets are and generally what they must do to improve. Guidance on future work and study options is excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Recent appointments at a senior level have galvanised improvements. Some developments in teaching, learning and assessment are more recent and have not yet had time to have a significant impact on everyone's practice. However, the school is clear about what constitutes effective teaching, learning and assessment. The work of the school is underpinned by good self-evaluation and well-targeted actions on priorities for improvement. Senior leaders conduct curriculum reviews and ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to support areas in need of development. School targets are challenging yet realistic. There has been a strong emphasis on developing the role of middle leaders. They are taking on increased levels of accountability and are beginning to

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get involved in driving improvements. However, the monitoring and review of a range of initiatives is not systematically embedded at middle management levels within the school.

The school communicates effectively with parents, through regular newsletters and use of the internet, and has a positive relationship with most parents and carers. The school consults with parents and carers on important issues, but their responses to the questionnaires indicate some would like the school to take greater account of their concerns and provide them with more help in supporting their children's learning. Further development of the parental area of the school's web-based learning portal is planned to address this. The school is highly committed to working with an extensive range of partners to promote students' learning and well-being and plays a leading role through its well-regarded and long-standing work as a specialist language college. The community programme is helping others, including local schools, to benefit enormously from the school's expertise and highly productive links have been made with a number of appreciative partners.

The governing body is extremely effective in holding the school to account for its performance. Safeguarding procedures and policies are good, as a result, the students feel very safe and the very large majority of parents and carers agree that their children are safe in the school. Equality of opportunity has a high priority and everything possible is done to ensure that all students are able to gain the most from the outstanding range of opportunities available to them. Policies and procedures to tackle and deal with discrimination are in place and are regularly monitored, but very few incidents occur. The promotion of community cohesion is embedded in school practices and constantly reviewed. It has a very positive impact on the personal development of students. The school provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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Views of parents and carers

A good number of parents and carers completed the inspection questionnaire. The large majority of parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and are happy with the quality of education and care the school provides for their children.

A small minority of parents expressed concerns about how effectively the school manages behaviour. The school acted swiftly to review its systems and procedures when faced with unacceptable behaviour from a very few students during the previous academic year. As a result, behaviour has been given a high priority and the inspection team found it to be outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Greenbank High 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 512 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 851 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	174	34	292	57	39	8	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	177	35	313	61	16	3	2	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	150	29	299	58	38	7	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	149	29	308	60	35	7	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	125	24	341	67	23	4	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	103	20	309	60	70	14	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	102	20	339	66	48	9	5	1
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)	134	26	310	61	20	4	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	125	24	319	62	38	7	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	101	20	308	60	52	10	14	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	92	18	309	60	48	9	6	1
The school is led and managed effectively	135	26	319	62	25	5	6	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	182	36	278	54	30	6	7	1

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



5 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Greenbank High School, Southport, PR8 2LT

Thank you for participating in the inspection by speaking to us and also filling in a questionnaire. This meant that we were able to consider your views when making our judgements. We were also able to consider the views of your parents and carers because the majority of them also filled in a questionnaire.

Your school is providing you with a very high quality of care and education. The school has a culture of high expectations in relation to your personal well-being and academic outcomes. The school's specialist status as a language college has an extremely positive impact on the life of the school. The school offers you an excellent curriculum and opportunities to gain the skills and qualifications that will help you to succeed in life. Your behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning are excellent. The school is well led and managed. Your headteacher, governors and teachers have worked very hard to improve the school since the last inspection. They continue to look at ways in which they can make the school even better. While we have judged your school to be outstanding overall, there are two areas that we have asked the school to improve further. We would like the school to:

- ensure that teachers use the assessment information they collect, on how well you are doing, to plan activities that will help you learn even more
- arrange for leaders and managers to regularly check on the success of changes happening in the school.

You can all, of course, help to improve your school further by continuing to work as hard as you can to achieve your best in tests and examinations, support each other and share your views about the school with staff.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Angela Milner

Her Majesty's Inspector

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