

Greendown Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126467
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	360092
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Anne Looney HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll	960
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr. Nick Martin
Headteacher	Clive Zimmerman
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 June 2008
School address	Grange Park Way Grange Park Swindon SN5 6HN
Telephone number	01793 874224
Fax number	01793 876274
Email address	head@greendown.swindon.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
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Royal Exchange Buildings
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 30 lessons, observed 29 teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and development plan, policy documents, students' work and external evaluations of the school's work. They also scrutinised 81 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and those completed by staff and a sample of students from each year group.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the achievement of all students, including that of middle-ability students, is now good.
- Whether teaching consistently promotes good learning and progress.
- How well the school ensures that every student develops equally well on a personal level.
- How effectively leaders have identified the reasons for the recent underachievement and how swiftly and well they have acted to bring about improvement.

Information about the school

Greendown is an average-sized secondary school. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language have risen over the last three years but remain below average in both groups. The school has specialist status in mathematics, computing and sport and has been the lead school for the introduction of the 14–19 diploma courses in the learning community. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen considerably over the last three years, although the number remains slightly below average. The students' needs include specific learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Since January 2010, the school has hosted a specialist resource provision for students with autistic spectrum disorder for the local authority.

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

Greendown is a good school. Since the time of the last inspection, it had maintained a steady trend of improvement in attainment up to 2009. In 2010, there was a drop in results although attainment remained broadly average. The school analysed the reason for the dip well and acted robustly to improve weaker areas of provision and management and to accelerate progress. Achievement is now good and there is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups. Students' positive attitudes and good behaviour play a key role in the quality of their learning in the classroom. The quality of the care, guidance and support students receive is good, and this ensures that they feel safe in the school. Students value the support given to them at difficult times in their lives, and particularly good systems ensure that their induction to the school is a smooth one. All the outcomes that relate to students' broader development are good.

The curriculum is good and has developed well since the last inspection. The greater breadth and choice at Key Stage 4 have had a positive impact on students' learning and progress, as the range of courses now better fits their needs. The school collaborates well with local providers to ensure good provision for students in Years 10 and 11 who have special educational need and/or disabilities.

Teaching is good. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subjects and have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned, learning objectives are appropriately challenging and teachers provide support or extension where needed. The quality of assessment is not as consistent across subjects. In the best lessons, teachers regularly check students' progress and verbal and written feedback in books makes explicit what they have done well and how they can improve their work. Students told inspectors that the quality of marking was variable and this was borne out by what was seen during the inspection.

The headteacher and the other senior leaders have a clear vision of where the school is going and this is shared across the school. Following the disappointing results in 2010, senior leaders provided effective support for leaders of subject areas identified as underperforming. The tracking of students' progress is rigorous and systems are understood well by students. The school analyses data well to monitor the progress of groups and individuals and this information is shared effectively with staff. There is regular monitoring of the work of departments. There are biennial reviews of subjects and annual lesson observations for all teachers as part of the performance management process. The annual observations lead to detailed and informative

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feedback but on occasions there is a focus on teaching alone rather than its impact on learning and progress, and this had led to some over generous grading of teaching. There is no consistent formal process for any follow-up to these observations, nor is there an opportunity to tackle a common area for improvement, such as assessment, through targeted lesson observations. This has led to slower progress in making improvements in such areas. Nevertheless, the school's self-evaluation is accurate and well grounded in evidence. The school has a good capacity for further sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning by ensuring that all teachers always make effective use of assessment strategies in lessons.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better, by applying a systematic and developmental approach to the monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students engage well with their learning and concentrate well. Over 91% of the students who responded to the student questionnaire said that they learnt a lot in lessons. Students respond well to opportunities to collaborate with others and they told inspectors that they really enjoyed being active and creative in lessons and would like to be able to do so more often. In lessons observed during the inspection, students responded very well to activities which required them to be independent and which had been carefully prepared by the teachers. Students talk knowledgeably about their work and about choices they have made. They understand how they are being assessed and value that they are involved in the target setting and review process. They feel, however, that they do not know equally well in every subject how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.

The proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics increased by seven percentage points between 2008 and 2009. This dropped in 2010 when a number of average ability students did not achieve as well as expected and there was some underperformance in a number of subjects. The school's detailed analysis of the wealth of data available indicates that all groups of students in the current Year 11 are on track to meet their challenging targets. Progress in other year groups is also good. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in the mainstream classes as they are well supported and their targets are regularly and carefully reviewed.

During the inspection, students talked openly and positively about their school and what it offers them, both within and beyond the curriculum. Attendance has improved and is now above average. Different groups of students say that they feel safe in the school and are confident that any issues will be dealt with swiftly by staff. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and they

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make the most of the wide range of sports activities the school offers. They contribute well both to the school and the wider community. Students are polite and courteous. A minority of students who responded to the questionnaire felt that behaviour was not good in the school. Inspectors spoke to a number of students about this and few felt that behaviour was actually a problem in the school. This supports inspectors' first-hand evidence and their scrutiny of the school's documentation on behaviour.

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	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good arrangements for the care of students contribute well to their good personal development. Support is well targeted and resources are focused clearly on those who have the greatest need. Work with a range of external agencies helps the school to provide that support. The assertive mentoring scheme under which all students in Year 11 and students at the end of Year 10 receive personalised support is valued highly by students. In the exit questionnaire completed by the current Year 11 students, there was considerable positive feedback on mentoring and on the booster and revision sessions provided by the school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of students well at both key stages. The school focuses well on the development of literacy as students enter the school and this is embedded in all subjects through the programme of 'communication for learning across the curriculum'. At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to have too narrow a range of vocational options

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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for students in Years 10 and 11. The range of such courses has been extended and this development has brought with it good success rates. The school is preparing students well for the future, for example by encouraging them successfully to incorporate a modern language into their choices at GCSE level. The specialist status ensures that information and communication technology is a core subject, although it is not used consistently well to support students’ learning in other subjects. Extra-curricular provision is good, with the school’s specialisms playing an important role in enhancing the range of activities available.

Teachers use a variety of learning activities and resources to maintain students’ interest and to develop good learning habits. Where progress and learning in lessons are good or better, teachers really probe students’ understanding through effective questioning and ensure that students are actively involved rather than simply listening to the teacher. Although teaching is good overall, in a small minority of lessons observed, satisfactory teaching led to satisfactory progress. In the majority of these cases, progress was impeded by the teacher’s insufficiently strong focus on assessment. Questions were not targeted to individuals and teachers did not check regularly enough that the students had understood. Where assessment is really helping students move forward, teachers monitor regularly against the learning objectives, ask students questions directly rather than wait for volunteers to respond and involve students well through self-assessment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	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?

The headteacher and the other senior leaders have shared their focus on improvement well with the middle leaders, and have supported them well through the line management structure and the regular review of students’ outcomes. This is then communicated well to other staff. All the staff who responded to the questionnaire stated that they knew what they were ‘trying to achieve as a school’. The improvement in examination results which was disrupted in 2010 is now back on track, and a major contributory factor has been the rigour with which the school regularly tracks students’ progress and intervenes when there is a drop. Students are involved well and understand clearly the criteria by which judgements are made after their regular ‘milestone’ assessments. The formal tracking of targets for students in the specialist resource provision is, however, not as rigorous as that for students in the mainstream classes. The work of curriculum areas is subject to regular scrutiny and senior leaders have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each

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area.

Whilst there has been a good level of support for subject leaders as they scrutinise their provision, there has been slower progress in the development of a consistent approach to assessment in subjects. It has not been sufficiently prioritised through lesson observations or in 'learning walks' and the good practice that exists has not been shared effectively. The governing body is well informed, has a good understanding of what the data show and challenges effectively, based on that knowledge and understanding. Governors have worked hard with the senior leaders to encourage greater engagement with parents and carers and are intending appropriately to continue to do so. Parents and carers involve themselves well in events relating to progress of their own children, but have shown less willingness to engage more broadly with the school.

The school makes good use of its extensive range of partners to extend the curriculum and to support students' well-being. The specialism in sport has been particularly important in the way the school has raised its profile by developing curricular links with feeder primary schools. During the inspection, Year 10 BTEC sport students planned for, and led, very effective sessions for Year 5 pupils identified as being gifted and talented. The school has strong links with many groups in the local community and has been cited as a model for community work by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. However, its promotion of community cohesion as a whole is satisfactory rather than good due to the informality of audits and plans.

The school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination well. It has effectively focused on the progress of different groups, and the gaps between groups have closed. Good procedures ensure the safety of students in the school's care.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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
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	2

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money	
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Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that their children enjoyed school, that they were happy with their children’s experience and that they believed that the school kept their children safe. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about how well the school helped them support their children’s learning and about how effectively the school took account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team followed up these areas but found no evidence to support their concerns and judged these aspects of the school’s work to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Greendown Community 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 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 960 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	42	44	54	1	1	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	36	44	41	51	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	35	43	43	53	1	1	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	42	41	51	5	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	25	31	52	64	1	1	2	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	28	40	49	12	15	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	25	55	68	4	5	1	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)	28	35	42	52	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	27	33	48	59	5	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	30	47	58	3	4	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	20	46	57	8	10	4	5
The school is led and managed effectively	31	38	46	57	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	31	38	45	56	2	2	2	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



27 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Greendown Community School, Swindon SN5 6HN

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us, both in meetings and as we walked around the school. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school, which we judged to be good.

After the drop in examination results in 2010, we were pleased to see that the school acted quickly and that achievement for all students is now good. The school promotes your personal development well and we felt that your positive attitudes and your good behaviour contributed a lot to how well you did in class. You told us that the school kept you safe. We agreed with you and judged the care, guidance and support you receive to be good. The curriculum on offer has developed and now meets your needs better, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where there are now more vocational choices. School leaders have got a clear picture of how they want the school to improve and that view is shared well across the school. The school monitors your progress well, making good use of the data it collects from your regular 'milestone' assessments. Teaching is good and this helps you make good progress in lessons, although there is some inconsistency in the way that teachers assess your progress in lessons and mark your work. You also told us that marking varied between subjects. We felt that the observations of teaching made by the school's managers did not always help teachers to develop their practice quickly enough.

We have therefore asked the school to improve the quality of learning by making sure that all teachers use assessment strategies well. We have also asked the school to ensure that the monitoring of teaching helps teachers to improve their practice.

All of you can help by getting involved as much as possible in lessons and by continuing to behave as well as we saw you behave during the inspection. I wish you all the best for your future happiness and success.

Yours sincerely

Anne Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector

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