

# Inspection of Greenbank School

Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1LD

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Inspection dates: 28 February to 2 March 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 5 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy and safe at Greenbank School. They told inspectors that staff support them well. This helps pupils to believe in themselves.

Pupils described the many 'fun' activities that they experience at school or in the residential provision after school, such as learning to shop or cook for themselves. Pupils benefit from these, and other, carefully selected opportunities. They grow in confidence and independence.

The school is a calm and harmonious place. Pupils get on well with each other. They learn how to respect each other's differences and points of view. Leaders quickly identify any incidents of bullying and deal with them well.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school. Pupils are polite and respectful. They embrace the welcoming and supportive culture that leaders have established. Pupils can be trusted to move around the school independently and safely.

Leaders' expectations of what some older pupils, and students in the sixth form, can and should achieve are not high enough. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, do not achieve as well as they should.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

All pupils in this school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils begin the school in Year 7 with gaps in their knowledge. Many pupils also lack confidence in their ability to learn. Leaders and other staff get to know pupils well. Over time, they accurately identify and address any newly emerging SEND. Staff provide effective strategies to help pupils to manage the anxieties that they experience because of their SEND.

Leaders provide a broad and suitably ambitious key stage 3 curriculum. The curriculum in Year 7 helps pupils to re-engage with their learning. For example, pupils develop and strengthen their reading and mathematical knowledge. This provides pupils with a strong foundation from which to access the wider curriculum. Across key stage 3, pupils develop their knowledge sufficiently well in many subjects.

The curriculum for pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form lacks ambition. Leaders have not thought enough about the essential knowledge that pupils should learn as they progress from key stage 3. Leaders do not take sufficient account of what pupils already know and can do. They do not ensure that pupils and students build on what they have already learned. Leaders focus primarily on preparing these pupils for nationally recognised qualifications. However, this narrow focus does not

help pupils to develop the deep body of subject knowledge required to achieve well across the curriculum or for future study.

In key stage 4 and the sixth form, leaders do not ensure that staff use assessment systems as effectively as they should to identify pupils' misconceptions. This is because teachers are not clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this should be taught. This hinders teachers' ability to design learning that addresses these misconceptions.

Teachers are adept at identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils across key stage 3 benefit from the school's consistently well delivered phonics programme. Teachers skilfully support pupils in key stage 4 who continue to find reading more difficult for as long as they need it. As a result, pupils are able to work out what unfamiliar words say. This prepares them well for learning new vocabulary.

Leaders provide a well-thought-out programme to support pupils' wider personal development. The range of opportunities that leaders provide helps pupils to build up their resilience. Pupils learn to overcome some of the difficulties that they experience because of their SEND. For example, pupils develop useful independent living skills, including strong social and communication skills. They benefit from well-organised careers information, advice and guidance. Older pupils take part in work experience linked to their interests and talents. This helps pupils to prepare well for adulthood.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to self-regulate their behaviour and manage their anxieties. Staff provide clear guidance to support pupils to develop positive attitudes about their own ability. This helps pupils to be ready to learn and means that lessons are undisturbed.

Most pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have put in place effective support for the small numbers of pupils who do not attend school as regularly as they should.

Leaders work closely with staff, and parents and carers, to ensure that pupils are supported well. Parents value the support that they receive from leaders. Staff appreciate actions that leaders consistently take to help them to manage their workload and to promote their well-being.

Leaders and governors lack sufficient oversight of the quality of education that pupils receive. For example, they do not have an accurate enough picture of how well pupils across the school are building up their knowledge. Governors do not provide robust challenge to leaders, to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they could.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff know how to identify when a pupil is at risk of potential harm. Staff record safeguarding incidents and concerns about pupils on the school's agreed system. However, sometimes staff do not ensure that these records are sufficiently detailed. This means that, on occasion, some pupils do not receive the support that they need quickly enough. Added to this, leaders do not have an accurate oversight of the pattern of emerging safeguarding concerns or some pupils' unsafe behaviour. This sometimes prevents staff from putting in place appropriate preventative measures in response.

Leaders make sure that pupils learn about safe and unsafe relationships. Pupils know what they should do if someone else's behaviour makes them feel uncomfortable.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders' and governors' records of some safeguarding incidents hamper their ability to identify and address emerging safeguarding issues. This also means that on occasion, important information is not passed on quickly enough to relevant members of staff or to parents. Leaders should ensure that staff are well equipped to record sufficient detail about their concerns about pupils.
- The curriculum in key stage 4 and in the sixth form is not suitably ambitious. Leaders have not thought carefully enough about what they want pupils to learn. As a result, older pupils do not build on prior knowledge as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers in key stage 4 and the sixth form are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this content should be taught. This is so that pupils can develop a deep and rich body of subject knowledge.
- Governors do not have sufficient oversight of the quality of education that pupils receive. As a result, they do not provide sufficient challenge and support to leaders. Governors should ensure that they strengthen their knowledge of how to hold leaders to account more effectively.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111503
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256239
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	118
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	29
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Phillip Hopwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael McCann
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.greenbankschool.org">www.greenbankschool.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils' primary need is autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school meet the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was deemed a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

The inspection was originally aligned with an inspection of the residential care that the governing body are also responsible for. This alignment was removed when the inspection was deemed.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. They spoke with a group of governors online, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with an education consultant commissioned by leaders and the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents for safeguarding, including records of the checks made on staff and visitors, staff training records and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, and personal, social, health and economic education. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. In addition, inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also discussed learning in other subjects, such as computing, physical education, history and geography.
- An inspector listened to pupils read with a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes, and as they moved around the school. They also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses from parents, to find out their views on the school.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

## Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kate Bowker

His Majesty's Inspector

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