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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Greenhill Special School
Heol Brynglas
Rhiwbina
Cardiff
CF14 6UJ

Date of inspection: March 2013

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Publication date: 17/05/2013

Context

Greenhill is a special school, maintained by Cardiff City Council, that provides day education for 56 pupils age 11 to 16. All pupils have statements of special educational needs in relation to their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils have specific learning difficulties that may include dyslexia, dyspraxia or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A few pupils also have particular medical needs.

Almost all pupils live in Cardiff and a very few come from neighbouring authorities. Currently all the pupils on roll are boys. About one fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very few pupils are looked after by the local authority. Currently no pupils speak English as a second language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. About 80% of pupils receive free school meals. This is much higher than the all Wales average of 20%.

Pupils are taught in seven classes that are broadly determined by pupils' age and key stage. The school provides an alternative education programme to meet pupils' needs. Most pupils, and mainly those in in key stage 4, follow this programme.

The school was last inspected in January 2007. The headteacher took up post in September 2007. The leadership team was restructured in 2011 to include the headteacher, deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher who took up the post in 2011.

The 2012-2013 individual school budget per pupil for Greenhill Special School is £18,292, which compares to a national average of £18,633 for all maintained special schools in Wales.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Greenhill Special School is a good school because:

- pupils at both key stages achieve good standards in relation to their individual learning needs and abilities;
- most pupils have a positive attitude to learning and engage well in lessons;
- the rate of fixed term exclusion has fallen by 43% over the past three years. In addition, there have been no permanent exclusions for the past five years;
- pupils have access to a range of learning options that lead to qualifications in accredited courses;
- the school provides a range of stimulating learning experiences that cover all aspects of the curriculum; and
- individual pupils' needs and abilities are assessed carefully to inform comprehensive and well-focussed individual education plans.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement at Greenhill Special School are good because:

- pupils' standards have improved over time;
- there is a strong focus on using data to plan interventions for pupils;
- the leadership team has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement; and
- leadership has been very effective in securing whole school improvements since the last inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Continue to implement strategies to improve pupils' attendance

R2 Improve planning for information and communication technology (ICT) in all subject areas

R3 Improve opportunities for staff to share good practice in order to further develop effective strategies for teaching and managing pupils' behaviour

R4 Further develop nurture practice and ensure that all staff have a deeper understanding of the process and its potential impact.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good

Standards: Good

Pupils that attend Greenhill Special School have difficulties in managing their behaviour and all have faced significant challenges in their previous schools. Many pupils struggle to relate well to others and trust adults. Over time, with the support of staff, pupils gain in confidence and take pride in their work and achievements.

Overall, pupils make good progress in relation to their individual learning needs and abilities. For many, considering their low starting point, this is significant.

Improvement targets for individual pupils are clear. They identify learning and behaviour goals and key staff are allocated to support pupils in achieving these targets. As a result, there have been continued improvements in the performance of pupils for the past four years.

Pupils have benefited from the school's co-ordinated approach to raising standards in literacy. Most pupils have improved both their reading and spelling skills across the key stages.

Pupils who are looked after and those that receive additional literacy support make very good progress.

Where appropriate, the school enters pupils for accreditation early. This motivates pupils. Currently, 12 pupils have attained 48 Entry Level qualifications, three GCSEs and Open College Network certificates.

Older pupils benefit from a wide range of accredited qualifications. These are matched well to their ability and include Entry Level, BTEC and GCSE courses. The number of pupils attaining a recognised qualification has improved. Over the past three years, the majority of leavers at key stage 4 have moved on to further education, training or employment.

In many lessons, pupils' behaviour is good. With appropriate support, most pupils are attentive and make good progress. Pupils are increasingly confident in recalling prior learning and most are able to write for different purposes. However, in a few lessons, where pupils are not fully engaged, they leave lessons early and disrupt the learning of others.

As a result of targeted support, pupils are encouraged to read. They monitor their own progress and analyse text. Some are beginning to read for pleasure. Consequently, pupils' skills in reading have improved.

Pupils are developing their number skills well. They make good progress in terms of the quality of their work and progress to more challenging tasks. In science for example, all pupils are able to apply numeracy skills in recording findings from basic

experiments and develop their use of scientific vocabulary. Pupils who are more able can work out simple formulae. In addition, a few pupils identify their own learning targets for the lesson and assess their progress against them. This is a good feature.

In a few lessons, pupils have appropriate opportunities to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. However, pupils do not always use their numeracy and ICT skills well across other subjects.

Most pupils routinely use incidental Welsh in making simple requests. A few pupils are confident in engaging in short unscripted conversations. These pupils develop an extensive vocabulary and fluency.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils say that they enjoy school and the majority attend regularly. Most pupils have improved their attendance in comparison with their previous mainstream placements. Pupils feel that they are safe in school and know with whom to talk if they are worried or upset.

Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning and engage well in lessons. Most pupils understand how well they are doing and are able to discuss their progress against specific targets. Pupils engage well with the school points system with rewards linked closely to individual behaviour targets. The majority of pupils are making good progress in developing their ability to work independently.

Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep healthy and of the importance of exercise; these pupils participate fully in a range of outdoor activities and team sports.

The majority of pupils behave very well. When pupils display challenging behaviour, staff help them to moderate their behaviour in a controlled and safe way. The majority of pupils show respect for their teachers, support staff and guests to the school. Relationships between staff and nearly all pupils are very strong.

All pupils are encouraged to participate actively in the life of the school. Most pupils willingly participate in the school and eco-councils. Those pupils involved are enthusiastic about their responsibilities and take pride in the changes they make, for example in designing and helping to build an outside activity area and helping to plan trips and excursions.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their social and life skills. Many pupils develop an increased understanding and respect for the local community through their involvement in local events, for example in hedge-cutting as part of a local project. Many older pupils participate successfully in vocational opportunities and work experiences that prepare them for further education, training or employment.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	**Good**

Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a range of stimulating learning experiences that cover all aspects of the curriculum.

At key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils have access to a range of options that lead to qualifications in a range of accredited courses through clear, individual learning pathways. All key stage 4 pupils have appropriate opportunities for work experience.

There is an effective alternative curriculum programme for pupils who have a history of non-attendance, exclusion, lack of motivation or challenging behaviours. The programme helps these pupils to engage and develop pride in their learning.

The school provides a good range of extra-curricular experiences. Visits to local places of interest and pupil participation in local community events enhance their education.

The school has made good progress in implementing a skills based curriculum. In almost all areas of the curriculum, pupils have well-planned opportunities to develop their key skills. However, pupils need more opportunities to use ICT skills across the curriculum.

Throughout the school, learning experiences give pupils opportunities to develop their self-esteem. As they progress through the school, pupils become more confident in making choices and managing their behaviour. They communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively.

The school offers stimulating experiences that enable all pupils to have a good understanding about healthy living, sustainability and global citizenship. Pupils participate in a range of activities to promote sustainability including recycling, gardening and energy conservation.

Across both key stages, pupils have good opportunities to develop and use their Welsh language skills. Staff plan stimulating and challenging lessons. Staff and pupils use incidental Welsh accurately and Welsh is prominent in displays.

There is good provision to develop pupils' understanding of the history and culture of Wales, for example through residential visits to relevant places of interest.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is good in most lessons. Where teaching is good or better, staff develop positive relationships with pupils and use effective strategies to engage them. In these lessons, teachers' planning provides clear learning objectives that are shared and understood by pupils. These teachers have detailed subject knowledge and planned activities meet individual pupils' learning needs.

Where teaching has shortcomings, lesson plans do not offer clear and concise learning objectives or sufficient detail about how topics and tasks would meet the specific needs of pupils. In these lessons, teachers do not use an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources.

Teachers' planning throughout the school is generally thorough and well matched to the needs of the pupils. Careful assessments of individual pupils' needs and abilities inform comprehensive and well-focused individual education plans (IEPs).

Marking is generally good. Most teachers give positive feedback to pupils and provide constructive criticism which helps the pupils to improve their work. Assessment for learning strategies are used well across the school and pupils are enthusiastic when given the opportunity to assess their own progress. Most pupils know their individual learning targets and this enables them to focus on areas they need to improve.

Teachers and support staff work well together as a team. They plan and deliver lessons in a purposeful environment. The staff team have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour in class and around the school. Almost all staff manage the behaviour of the pupils well. However, on a few occasions the behaviour of a few pupils interferes with the learning of others.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school effectively promotes pupils' health, wellbeing, and the benefits of regular exercise and healthy eating. Nearly all pupils participate fully in sports and outdoor activities such as climbing, walking and canoeing. Most pupils take part in residential trips to Snowdonia and closer to home where they can develop skills and pastimes over longer periods.

Most pupils engage successfully with the school. The school provides a wide range of alternative education opportunities. These include extended work placements, working with school staff off-site, teen-fit and other projects.

There is appropriate provision for pupils' spiritual development through collective worship, where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and how it affects others. Pupils are encouraged to care for each other, to be honest and to treat each other fairly and with respect.

The school's behaviour policy is effective and is clearly understood by both staff and pupils. When pupils achieve individual learning targets and behave well, they are rewarded appropriately. In cases of poor behaviour, suitable sanctions are used wisely to promote improvement of behaviour.

All pupils benefit from clear and concise individual education plans. Targets are measurable and appropriate to the needs of the pupils. The plans also clearly highlight which staff will be able to help pupils to achieve their goals. The school assesses pupils on entry. However, not all pupils have engaged fully with literacy assessments.

Support staff provide pupils with high quality guidance in and outside the classroom. The school accesses a wide range of specialist services appropriately. An in-house school counsellor and a family therapist, employed by the school, provide pupils with valuable support.

Pupils develop an understanding of how to develop as individuals and avoid behaviours that are damaging to themselves and others. The school effectively engages agencies to support pupils in keeping themselves safe. Pupils learn how to manage their own feelings and be considerate for the feelings of others.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community that provides positive learning opportunities for pupils. Pupils are treated with respect and all have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Social and residential activities make a significant contribution to the positive relationships that exist between pupils and staff. Teambuilding skills of all pupils are developed well. They take part in visits to museums, the theatre and trips to London. All pupils are provided with sports kit and camping equipment to ensure inclusion.

The school has a good range of resources that meet the needs of all pupils.

Accommodation is sufficient and well utilised. Previously redundant rooms have been converted into a library and the therapy room. An additional building accommodates the nurture provision. Specialist rooms accommodate woodworking, cookery and the gymnasium.

Pupils' work, subject displays and photographs of trips help to create a lively and stimulating learning environment. The outside space is extensive with grassed and hard areas. A local organisation, with the help of pupils, built a training obstacle course.

The school is an inclusive community providing pupils with a wide range of learning and social experiences in a positive learning environment.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good

Leadership: Good

The headteacher and senior leadership team have established a clear vision for the school, which is shared by all staff. They work well together to create a school ethos where staff, pupils and others who visit the school on a regular basis feel highly valued.

They have implemented comprehensive policies and plans that concentrate on meeting the wide range of pupils' needs. All leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and focus appropriately on school improvement targets.

Senior and middle leaders work well across the school to support and challenge colleagues. The developing distributed leadership system is having a positive impact on both pupils' standards and staff development.

Managers monitor and evaluate staff performance regularly and effectively through a secure performance management and appraisal system. Careful monitoring of teaching has resulted in improvements to the delivery of a curriculum, which meets the varied learning needs of the pupils. The training needs of new staff are quickly identified and they receive an appropriate induction programme.

The governing body shares the school's vision and is supportive of the school. It meets regularly and has appropriate sub-committees in place. Governors visit classes, observe activities and monitor the school's performance. Although this process is developing well, it is at an early stage and not robust.

The school meets both local and national priorities effectively. These include the local authority's priorities for special schools, the School Effectiveness Framework agenda and the Unlocking Potential of Special Schools initiative.

Improving quality: Good

The process of self-evaluation has been developed and refined effectively since the last inspection. The self-evaluation report identifies accurately areas where the school is performing well and aspects of the school's work that require improvement.

The school uses monitoring information that has been collected from a wide variety of sources. This includes the views of the school leadership team, pupils, parents, teachers, governors and the local authority. The range and quality of the data and information built up over a number of years mean that the self-evaluation document provides the leadership team with a good overview of progress made by pupils.

The school makes good use of the self-evaluation report to focus whole school improvement targets on raising standards, including using data at individual pupil level. There are clear links between the self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan. It contains essential information including timescales, costings and outcomes. It also incorporates regular monitoring of the impact of initiatives on standards.

As a result, development planning at whole school and individual subject level is good.

Staff have developed a number of networks of professional practice within the school and work collaboratively with colleagues in mainstream and special schools. Professional development opportunities are linked clearly to school priorities and focus on raising standards, for example in literacy and Welsh.

Partnership working: Good

The school has formal and informal partnerships with an extensive range of organisations. They include local further and alternative education providers, voluntary organisations and charities, local secondary and special schools. In addition, the school has collaborated effectively with the local authority education psychology service in identifying and supporting looked after pupils who attend the school.

The most effective partnerships, for example 14-19 network and the Unlocking Potential of Special Schools Further Education collaboration, have ensured that pupils who may have difficulty in making the transition to further education receive appropriate support and guidance in order to gain the qualifications and skills required to access further education, training or employment. The independent travel programme for older pupils has resulted in them using public transport to travel to and from school. This has had a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and self-esteem.

Greenhill Special School has adopted a number of strategies to build on the good relationships that exist with most parents and carers. These include collaboration with the attendance officer to support parents in raising individual pupils' attendance and providing a transport service that enables families to access the regular parents' evenings.

The impact of the school's partnership with the local authority's Welsh language advisory service is apparent in the high standards now achieved by pupils in this subject.

A few of the partnerships established by the headteacher have enabled the school to access funding to improve the range of resources and provision, for example the specialist teaching area for specific learning difficulties, which has had a direct impact on raising standards for pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Resource management: Good

The school employs a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced staff. These are deployed effectively and ensure that appropriate learning opportunities are planned for all pupils.

As a result of staff appraisals, the school plans for training on an annual basis. The continued professional development of staff is matched well to priorities for school development and staff individual needs. The recent emphasis on training in literacy for staff is having a positive impact on pupils' standards.

The headteacher manages the school budget well and areas of spending are in line with emerging priorities. The leadership team has been pro-active in securing additional grants to develop further learning experiences for pupils at the school. The school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Response to parents' questionnaire

The number of responses received was too low to provide a representative view. However, these were taken into consideration during the inspection.

Response to learners' questionnaire

Fifty-nine per cent of pupils completed the learner questionnaires. Most of the pupils agree that they feel safe in the school and that they can go to their teachers for help. Many pupils feel that issues of bullying are dealt with effectively. A minority of pupils feel that the behaviour of others interferes with their learning. With few exceptions, pupils believe that the school helps them to understand and respect people from different backgrounds. Many pupils feel that the school teaches them how to be healthy and all pupils agree that there are plenty of opportunities for exercise. Most pupils feel that they are doing well at school. However, the majority of pupils do not believe that homework helps them improve their learning. With a few exceptions, pupils feel that the school prepares them well in returning to school or moving on to further education, training or employment.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Huw Davies	Reporting Inspector
Alec Clarke	Team Inspector
Mike Munting	Team Inspector
Bernard Harrington	Lay Inspector
David Morgan	Peer Inspector
Jane Counsell	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of ALN terms

ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ALN: additional learning needs

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorders, includes Asperger's Syndrome

ATR: additional teacher resource

BESD, ESBD or SEBD: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties

CoP: Code of Practice

HI: hearing impairment

MSI: multi-sensory impairment

PMLD: profound and multiple learning difficulties

SpLD: specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia

VI: visual impairment