

# Penketh High School

Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2BY

## Inspection dates

11–12 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement has risen steadily over time, but progress among some groups of students in mathematics requires further improvement. The proportion of students making expected and more than expected progress in mathematics is lower than national figures.
- Although there is good and outstanding teaching, and teaching has improved over time, a limited proportion requires improvement. New initiatives have not been in place long enough to show sustained improvement.
- The progress of some groups of students, such as those supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs, is slower than that of other students.
- The sixth form requires improvement because there is a need for greater consistency in the outcomes for students on different courses. Students achieve well in A level and in BTEC courses but are not as successful in AS courses.

### The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved since the previous inspection. Students are safe and free from bullying.
- Senior leaders and governors have taken effective action since the previous inspection to improve teaching and achievement. As a result the school is continually improving.
- Achievement in the school's specialist subjects of art and design, media and drama is well above average.
- Good teaching and very effective support enables students with cognitive and learning difficulties to achieve well.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in both the main school and sixth form. They have a well developed appreciation of the arts and make a strong contribution to their community.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons taught by 45 teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of students, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 13 responses recorded in Parent View and scrutinised the most recent school survey on the views of parents, conducted in 2011.

## Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Helen Gaunt	Additional inspector
Barry Jones	Additional inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional inspector
Chanan Tomlin	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Penketh is larger than the average-sized secondary school with specialist media and visual arts college status. It has a smaller-than-average sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is a little below average.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and only a small number of students are from minority-ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus and with statement of special educational needs.
- The school facilitates designated provision for up to 12 students with cognition and learning difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress.
- The school holds several awards in recognition of the quality of its work. These include Artsmark Gold, Investors in People and the International Schools Award.
- The school plans to become an academy on 1 March 2013.

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

- Further improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
  - putting more emphasis on the progress individual students make in each lesson, and particularly the progress of students supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs
  - checking students' understanding more often during lessons
  - giving students more opportunities to work independently
  - planning lessons more specifically to meet individual needs so that tasks and activities are different for students of different abilities
  - injecting more pace into some lessons so that students are consistently challenged
  - setting higher expectations for the quality of work in students' books so that they have good scripts from which to revise
  - briefing teaching assistants fully so that they can make a stronger contribution to the learning of individuals and groups
  - ensuring further staff development in judging the quality of progress in lesson observations
  - ensuring that marking is consistent across all ability groups in providing regular and helpful advice that gives attention to detail.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in mathematics by:
  - developing clear strategies to support the highest attaining students
  - improving the quality and precision of marking
  - setting high expectations in all classrooms of what students can achieve
  - embedding strategies to raise attainment at Key Stage 3 as a better preparation for GCSE.
- Review the curriculum in the sixth form to ensure that it is better suited to promote the achievement of all students.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. Their rate of progress over time has been average in English and below average in mathematics. However, progress in both subjects is accelerating as a result of effective action taken by leaders and managers and better teaching. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is average in English and below average in mathematics. Nevertheless, results in mathematics at GCSE have risen from 2009, when 37% of students achieved grade C and above, to 66% in 2012. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades in mathematics is below average.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 have risen each year for the past four years. Although the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A\* to C including English and mathematics shows strong improvement, there is still need for further improvement to ensure achievement is consistently good in all subjects.
- Currently, the students who make the best progress are those of average ability and the small number of students in the resourced provision. The lower-attaining students, including those supported through school action and school action plus, and those known to be supported by the pupil premium make less progress than similar students nationally. The school needs to accelerate the progress of these groups and to ensure that the higher-attaining students achieve consistently well in all subjects.
- Students in the designated provision learn and achieve well because they respond well to their teachers, work effectively, both collaboratively and independently, and take pride in their work. These students make consistently good progress.
- There is significant variation in the achievement of students in the sixth form. Students studying the school's specialist areas such as art and design, communication and media achieve consistently well above average. Achievement in English is good. Students studying single science subjects have generally been less successful. Success rates in applied science are excellent. Students' overall achievement in 2012 at A level was good; it required improvement at AS level. It was good in BTEC subjects.

### The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Weaker teaching occurs when lessons are too teacher-led and students are not given sufficient time to work independently. This also applies to the teaching in the sixth form. Some teachers do not check understanding during lessons and sometimes the same topic is delivered to a whole class without taking account of the different starting points of the students.
- Students are not always given sufficient challenge in lessons and some comment that work is too easy. In some lessons, there is no extension work and students who finish tasks early do not move onto new work but complete more of the same.
- Currently, there is too much variation between the achievement and teaching of different groups of students and standards attained in different subjects. Not all subjects achieve the strong outcomes seen in English, arts subjects and citizenship as a result of good teaching seen there.
- There is also too much variation in the quality of teachers' marking. Some is excellent; demonstrating good practice, but some is casual, allows too many careless errors and does not give sufficient advice to students on how to improve.
- Some teachers are setting low expectations for the quality of work in pupils' books where expectations are low, too many pieces of work across a range of subjects are incomplete and do not provide sufficient quality from which to revise later in the year.
- In the many lessons where teaching is strongest, students are enthused, well motivated and actively engaged in their learning. In the best lessons, students contribute significantly to their own learning and take pride in their achievements. Relationships are excellent.

- Teaching in the designated unit is good because lessons are very carefully tailored to the individual needs of the students.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm promotes good learning.
- Teaching assistants are deployed across the school but the impact of their contribution to lessons is variable. This is because sometimes the assistants have not been given sufficient information by teachers to enable them to make a significant contribution to the learning.
- Teaching is improving but teaching over time has not been strong enough to consistently raise standards sufficiently to be judged as good.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students in all year groups report that they feel safe in school and trust the adults.
- Students report that bullying is rare, is mainly limited to name calling and is swiftly dealt with by the school. A website-based system gives all students the opportunity to report any instances of bullying that they have experienced or to report any concern about a friend or other student. This can be done anonymously if they prefer.
- Students and staff all agree that behaviour has significantly improved over the last few years. Students in all year groups comment that behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is now typically good. This was evident during the inspection. Exclusions have reduced significantly over time and are below average.
- Attendance is consistently in line with, or a little above, average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has decreased because of effective strategies used by the school to work with parents and carers and to reward good attendance.
- Students are generally punctual to lessons. They are respectful, courteous and polite.
- Students feel proud of their school. They embrace the new Penketh Charter, an action plan designed to take the school along the road to its declared ambition to become outstanding.
- Students in Years 12 and 13 play a significant role in mentoring and supporting younger students. They enjoy the sixth form because they say that, 'teachers know you well'. They learn in a friendly and supportive atmosphere and they take up numerous opportunities to do voluntary work.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Since the previous inspection senior leaders have taken significant steps to drive improvement in teaching. They have improved the monitoring of the school's work and the skills of middle leaders to evaluate accurately the quality of the school's provision. The initiatives recently introduced by senior leaders are proving effective but have not been embedded sufficiently to raise overall attainment and achievement in the weaker areas. Nevertheless, the success achieved so far and the quality of leadership at all levels indicates the strong capacity in the school for further improvement.
- A new and rigorous tracking system ensures that all teachers have a clear understanding of students' progress. This is contributing to higher expectations, rising standards and better achievement. Teachers recognise the need to look at progress from Years 7 to 11 and not just at Key stage 4. A new marking policy aims at improving the consistency of marking.
- The gap between the achievement of girls and boys has narrowed. Senior leaders have invested the pupil premium funding in providing additional teaching and resources to support better progress in mathematics and literacy.
- Senior leaders have used performance management and professional development effectively to support and challenge teachers whose work was satisfactory, rather than good, so increasing the proportion of good and better teaching.

- Improved behaviour reflects effective new systems for the daily monitoring of learning and behaviour by house and faculty leaders.
  - In the recent past, some of the lesson observations carried out by middle leaders have been too generous in their judgements and have focused too much on teaching techniques and not enough on what the students are learning.
  - Leadership is good in the resourced provision's pleasant learning environment. Every effort is made to help build students' confidence and integrate them into mainstream school.
  - Despite re-structuring and increased challenge, the morale of staff is high. A high proportion of the staff responded positively to the inspection questionnaire. A comment typical of many was, 'I feel that Penketh is in the midst of a real improvement. The ambition of senior leaders is shared by staff who have been energised by this drive, and we can all see the results of this amongst our students.' Staff have embraced the new Penketh Charter recognising that it encapsulates the school's ambition to become outstanding.
  - The school has a good partnership with parents and carers who responded very positively in the most recent survey. Parents were happy with most aspects of the school.
  - The local authority has supported the school in a number of ways including advice on the faculty restructuring, budgeting and improving mathematics.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - governors support the school effectively and have a thorough knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses
    - the governing body has set challenging performance management targets for the headteacher and is rigorous in assisting the school to check the impact of actions taken
    - governors undertake their statutory duties effectively and have ensured that safeguarding requirements are fully met.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111431
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	405337

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,137
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	130
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Holmes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jeff Hughes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 September 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 722298
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