

Pensby High School for Boys: A Specialist Sports College

Irby Road, Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside, CH61 6XN

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The 2013 GCSE examination results were below average, including in English, mathematics and science. Although results in 2014 are better overall, this is not the case in all subjects. Attainment in mathematics lags behind that in English.
- The progress of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is slower than other students in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and learning does not enable all students to make rapid and sustained progress. Expectations are not yet always high enough and too few students, including the most able, achieve the higher examination grades of which they are capable.
- Behaviour is not consistently good; some students are sometimes distracted and do not pay complete attention.
- The monitoring of teaching and of students' progress by leaders has not been rigorous enough over time. Middle leaders are still developing their effectiveness in doing so.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Examination results are below average.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are now vigorously pursuing a programme for school improvement and there is an ambition for and confidence in achieving higher standards that has been successfully communicated to the whole-school community.
- Decisive action is being taken to improve teaching and to raise expectations for achievement. Many initiatives are at an early stage, but an impressive amount has been achieved by the recently appointed Principal in a very short time.
- Governors have a clear strategic vision for the development of the school.
- Attendance has improved, including in the sixth form, and is now above average.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, eight of them jointly with senior leaders in the school.
- Inspectors sampled aspects of school life, including an assembly and students’ social times.
- Meetings held during the inspection included those with senior and middle leaders, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took the opportunity to speak with students both in arranged groups and informally in and out of class.
- Inspectors considered the 28 responses to the online survey of parental opinion (Parent View), together with the school’s own records of parents’ opinions.
- Inspectors received and considered 63 Ofsted survey questionnaires completed by members of the school’s staff.
- The school’s records covering key aspects of its work were consulted. These included records of students’ progress, school planning, behaviour and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors examined the school’s procedures and policies for the safeguarding of students.

Inspection team

Paul Copping, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Wall

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and students with special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is very high.
- Almost all students are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school is federated with Pensby High School for Girls.
- Sixth-form students are taught in a consortium with Pensby High School for Girls and Hilbre High School Humanities College.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The Principal of the school took up his post at the start of the current term.
- The school enters some students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise students' achievement, including in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring that information about each student's past achievement is always used in planning teaching so that they make at least good progress
 - setting work that is challenging for all students, including the most able, so that they achieve the highest possible attainment and make best possible progress
 - encouraging students to be ambitious for what they can achieve by embedding high expectations in all teaching and ensuring that students are always clear about those expectations
 - ensuring that the best teaching evident in school is used as a model to share with staff and bring teaching up to the standard of the best
 - continuing to improve the behaviour of a few students in some lessons so that the best learning is always achieved
 - encouraging students to build their confidence as learners and acquire deeper understanding by questioning that requires reflection and extended thought
 - embedding high quality teaching of literacy across the subjects of the curriculum so that students are able to understand more complex writing and tackle with confidence reading in formal situations, such as examinations.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that accountability for students' progress is central to the work of leaders at all levels
 - continuing the development of the effectiveness of middle leaders, particularly with regard to the accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The monitoring of teaching and learning and of students' progress has not been of high enough quality since the last inspection and has not improved standards quickly enough. Not enough has been made of detailed and accurate local authority reviews of teaching and learning that clearly identified weaknesses and should have assisted improvement.
- Decisive action is now being taken to improve teaching and learning as part of an accelerated school improvement plan. The school is now improving under strong leadership. The appointment of the new Principal at the start of term is generally seen by the school community as the start of a new chapter and the pace of development has become rapid. It is striking that in the survey of staff opinion the responses are overwhelmingly positive about the effectiveness of leadership, and expressed confidence that any current weaknesses would certainly be remedied under the leadership of the Principal. These views were endorsed by parents and students.
- The school has received extensive support from the local authority, financially and in terms of professional expertise. The former has allowed, for example, the appointment of a dedicated lead for literacy. The professional advice given was accurate in diagnosing shortcomings in teaching, although consequent action by the school had not exploited the information made available.
- Middle leaders have a growing role in the school and are often effective. However, over time they have not been consistently accurate in their evaluation of teaching or decisive enough in acting to implement necessary changes. Their use of information about what students have achieved needs to be further developed to guide the planning in each department. In mathematics, improvement is slower than in other subjects because information about students' progress is not analysed carefully enough to guide planning.
- The range of subjects available to students, and their organisation, is broad and balanced. Opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities are wide and they actively promote students' appreciation and promotion of the British values of mutual respect and fairness, which helps to prepare students for life in modern Britain. The school's sports college status underpins a strong sports programme that is complemented by a programme of drama performances; drama itself is a high-performing subject in the school. Instrumental tuition, including one-to-one teaching for some instruments, is subsidised by the school and offers valuable opportunities to students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious for the school and determined that current improvements are vigorously continued and built upon. They have made major strategic decisions for the future of the school that express a clear vision.
 - Their understanding of essential school data has now become thorough and they are working in close partnership with the new Principal on an improvement plan in which they are fully involved. They are aware of past shortcomings in the performance of the school, and their role in it, and have commissioned an external review of governance to drive improvement in their own work.
 - An effective committee system closely monitors the work of the school and there is a clear understanding of the way that teachers' pay needs to be linked to students' performance and that decisive action has to be taken where teaching identified as less than good does not rapidly improve. Governors ensure that the performance objectives for the Principal derive from school priorities.
 - Governors show full knowledge of the terms of reference for spending the pupil premium funding and appreciate the need to increase their detailed knowledge of the impact it is having on disadvantaged students' achievement.
 - Governors ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities concerning safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. A minority of students are not always punctual to lessons and some students are inattentive and not fully engaged in their learning, and this hampers their achievement.
- Conduct in social times and moving between lessons is good. Students' courtesy and consideration for each other and for adults is the norm. There is no litter, the buildings are treated with respect and students adhere very exactly to the school's expectations for the wearing of uniform. The confidence and good humour of the youngest students when moving between lessons in busy corridors reflect the fact

that their older peers are mindful of them. A striking feature is the lack of raised voices around the school, even at the busiest times of the day. The dining hall is calm and orderly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including that which might take place online. They feel that the school deals with any incidents promptly and effectively. Students consider the adults in school to be approachable, reliable and helpful.
- When students are taught in the partner school within the federation, they are safe and secure to the same standard. The care for students' well-being is a strength of the school.
- Attendance has improved well since the last inspection and is now above average.
- Fixed-term exclusion rates are low. There were no permanent exclusions in the last academic year.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it still requires improvement because it varies widely in quality, within and between subjects. There is exemplary practice but also some that fails to provide sufficient challenge to all students.
- Expectations of what students are capable of achieving are not always high enough. Interviews with students undertaken by advisors for a subject review in science, reported them as saying that they did not feel that the bar had always been set high enough for them. Some expressed frustration that their target grades would not gain them entry to the future courses they had decided upon and believed they could do better if required to do so.
- The checking of students' understanding by incisive questioning is not fully developed. Students are not always challenged to reflect on their work and to deepen their understanding of topics.
- In some teaching, the mechanics of grades and preparation for learning have a prominence over subject content and this breeds frustration in some students.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support in class and play a central role in learning support.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy requires improvement. The achievement of a significant proportion of students is hampered in many subjects by students' below average reading skills. For example, students' work in mathematics was slowed by an inadequate understanding of such terms as 'credit' and 'debit'. In mathematics, some teaching pitches work at too low a level to guarantee a consistently high level of challenge for all.
- Students' books show that, in the past, marking often provided encouragement but too little useful advice about how to improve. Improvements in teachers' marking are now clearly identifiable. The most recent marking is much more helpful in giving students clear pointers as to how they may improve. However, the information gathered from marking students' work is not yet used well enough to make sure that future work provides the best level of challenge for the whole range of students' abilities.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSEs with grades of A* to C, including English and mathematics, is not high enough, although there is a clear trend of improvement. Too few students make better than expected progress from their starting points on entering the school or achieve the higher grades in GCSE examinations. In some subjects, such as mathematics and modern foreign languages, attainment and progress lags behind that in other subjects.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students requires improvement. In Year 11 in 2013, in English, the attainment of disadvantaged students in the school was about two-thirds of a grade behind others in the school and slightly over one full grade behind non-disadvantaged students nationally. In mathematics, disadvantaged students were also two-thirds of a grade behind others in the school and non-disadvantaged students nationally. School data and inspection evidence shows that in 2014, the gaps in English narrowed but remain too wide in mathematics.
- Overall, disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers and sometimes better.
- The most able students are not yet making good progress. Too few students who attained a high Level 5 in their primary school go on to achieve the higher grades they should in GCSE examinations. Students' are not challenged to make good progress, or to reflect on their work to deepen their understanding.

- Attainment in English has improved considerably since 2013. The school has identified a relative weakness in students' writing skills and are now focussing on making sure that students complete more extended and unsupported writing. Recent test results show that students are becoming more confident in approaching the demands of formal writing, such as tackling examination questions. The additional funding to promote the achievement of Year 7 students who enter the school with below average levels of attainment in literacy is used effectively. As a result they are catching up with their peers.
- Leaders are confident that early entry to examinations in mathematics does not lead to any lowering of expectations for students' achievement, although they acknowledge that achievement in mathematics is not yet good.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form has improved since the last full school inspection but it still requires improvement because standards, although improving, remain below average.
- Unvalidated results in examinations in 2014 at A level and AS level show strong improvement. The proportion of students achieving A* to C grades at A level improved by 18% and by 10% at AS level. The proportion of students achieving the higher BTEC grades also increased sharply in 2014. The proportion of students achieving only a pass grade dropped dramatically: from more than half to less than a fifth.
- Improved attendance in the sixth form has contributed to students' better achievement. Students behave well.
- Teaching has also improved and now offers students an increased level of challenge. However, it is still variable in quality and overall requires improvement.
- The proportion of students who stay on the courses they initially select is high because the advice and guidance they receive is realistic and helpful. Students speak highly of the consortium arrangements. They enjoy the opportunity to work with students from the other schools and speak of benefitting from the healthy competition to do well.
- Improvement in achievement and attendance reflect improved leadership and management. Leaders now have a better understanding of how well students are doing. They ensure that partnerships with other schools in the consortium are used to improve provision for students, such as by enabling a broader choice of subjects and, in many cases, adding high-performing students to teaching groups.

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

Unique reference number	105100
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	447703

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	386
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Draper
Headteacher	Kevin Flanagan
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2013
Telephone number	0151 342 0570
Fax number	n/a
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