

Penistone Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106653
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	377440
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	John Rutherford HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,579
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David O'Hara
Headteacher	Jo Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent over 27 hours observing teaching and learning in 65 lessons, taught by 63 teachers. Meetings were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a School Evaluation Officer commissioned by the local authority to work with the school. Inspectors took account of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. During the inspection, they observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including those relating to students' progress, self-evaluation, improvement planning and safeguarding. Inspectors considered questionnaires returned from students, staff and 189 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most secondary schools and is non-selective. Six percent of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Three percent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Less than three percent of students are disabled or have special educational needs. The school moved into a new building in April 2011. Since the previous inspection there has been considerable disruption to staffing and to leadership at middle and senior levels. This disruption is not yet fully resolved. The school meets the current floor standard.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This school provides a satisfactory quality of education. In Key Stages 3 and 4, students' achievement is satisfactory overall, which represents an improvement during the last year and is the result of an urgent drive by the Principal and senior leaders to raise the quality of teaching. The improvements in teaching are increasing the amount of good achievement, but this is still in the minority and not sufficiently consistent across all subject departments for overall effectiveness to be judged better than satisfactory. This lack of consistency is mainly because subject leadership was badly affected by the staffing turbulence and the school has not got a full and effective team in place; therefore leadership and management, overall, are satisfactory.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The most significant recent improvement has been in the use of assessment to plan lessons that challenge and motivate all groups of students to increase the pace of their learning. Where these improvements are applied consistently, particularly in geography and physical education, students' achievement is good. In English and science there is less consistency; nevertheless a growing minority of students are improving their achievement from satisfactory to good. The least progress is in mathematics where the quality of teaching shows insufficient improvement and students' achievement is rarely better than satisfactory.
- The quality of education in the sixth form is good and students make progress at a better-than-expected rate. This is better than the rest of the school because teaching is consistently effective, particularly in the way it promotes students' skills in independent learning.
- Students' improving progress in English is helped by the many opportunities they have to extend their literacy skills in a wide range of subjects. They have not got the same opportunities to extend their numeracy skills.
- Students' behaviour is good and this contributes to their improving progress in lessons. They feel safe and happy in school and their attendance is above average. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, much of their tutor time has too little impact on these aspects of their personal development.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress to be at least good and raise their standards of attainment, especially in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring greater consistency in using assessment information to plan lessons that provide good challenge for all groups of students
 - ensuring all lessons engage students in interesting activities and enable them to learn at a good pace
 - providing more opportunities for students to extend their numeracy skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum.
- Ensure an effective contribution by subject leaders in securing consistently good or better teaching across the school.
- Ensure that tutor time makes a positive contribution to students' personal development.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The most recent national published data shows that, by the end of Year 11, students' standards of attainment are above average, which represents satisfactory progress given their starting point in Year 7. Of the parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire, the very large majority are happy with the progress their children are making. Senior leaders are less happy with the overall picture of satisfactory progress in the school and are working hard to improve it. They have accurately identified underachieving groups and are taking effective action to help them catch up. For example, until recently, a large proportion of students of average ability were not making sufficient progress to enable them to achieve the standards of which they were capable. This is being effectively tackled by planning lessons which continuously challenge these students to work at higher levels and, as a result, school records and lesson observations show that their rate of progress has increased to a satisfactory and, often, a good rate. A similar process also ensures that more able students are kept at the 'cutting edge' of their learning, rather than being left to coast along. There is much less progress above a satisfactory rate in mathematics than in English because the accurate targeting of additional challenge is not so well developed.

Senior leaders also identified underachievement in students with a moderate level of special educational needs. They have successfully reversed this situation by more accurately identifying the barriers to learning of these students and planning better support for them. Students at all levels of ability, whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are given very good support to keep them engaged in education and achieving well.

Students in the sixth form make good progress in a wide range of subjects and their good skills in independent study make a significant contribution to this, especially their ability to

carry out research, to evaluate information and to discuss new ideas. Over four fifths of students who leave the post 16 centre gain their first choice university place. Of all the students who leave in Years 11 and 13, a much higher than average proportion go into employment, education or training.

Quality of teaching

Students are making better progress in most subjects because the quality of teaching has improved considerably over the past year. The main driver for this improvement is a new approach to lesson planning. It enables teachers to use assessment information more effectively to plan lessons that provide the correct level of challenge for all of the different ability groups in their class. It also enables teachers to plan how they will assess the progress of each group during lessons and add extra challenge where appropriate. Where teachers have fully embraced and mastered this planning method, their students make good or outstanding progress. However, this is not consistent in all subject departments, and improvements are least evident in mathematics, and therefore, teaching overall is satisfactory.

An important feature of the new approach to planning is that it requires all teachers to consider how they will use work in their subject to extend students' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers are responding well in relation to developing literacy skills across the curriculum. For example: in a Year 10 citizenship lesson students extended their writing skills when balancing the arguments for and against capital punishment; in a Year 7 physical education lesson, students consolidated their skills in evaluative writing when reporting on the extent to which their performance met a set of criteria. There is considerably less evidence for the development of numeracy skills across the curriculum.

The school improvement plan focuses teachers' work on improving the pace of learning in lessons and the extent to which students are engaged in interesting problem-solving, research and discussion activities. A majority of teachers are adopting effective practice in relation to these priorities. For example: in a Year 8 English lesson, students made outstanding progress in learning about different writing styles by working in groups to analyse and discuss the features of a range of texts; in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, students produced an exceptionally high standard of performance by working in teams to achieve the challenging objectives set by the teacher. There is, however, a significant proportion of lessons where students are not motivated to learn because there is too much teacher talk or unchallenging activity, particularly in mathematics; therefore, progress is no better than satisfactory. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is much more consistently good because teachers have high expectations, not only for what students will learn, but also for how they will manage their own learning.

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire agreed that their children are taught well. However, a significant proportion commented that they were dismayed by the lack of continuity in learning caused by the large number of temporary teachers that have recently been taking classes. School leaders accept that this is a valid concern and are working as hard as they can to improve the situation.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is good in lessons and in the school's social areas. There is generally a calm, orderly working atmosphere which is only rarely disrupted by low-level disruption. The

very large majority of parents and carers, students and staff who returned an inspection questionnaire agree that behaviour, overall, is generally good; however, around a third of parents and carers specifically say that poor behaviour disrupts lessons. Inspection evidence does not confirm this, although students did say that 'messaging about' in lessons was more of a feature of life in the old building. Students respond very well to the school's behaviour management policy, which is applied consistently but with enough flexibility to take account of students' differing needs and circumstances. Very few students are excluded. Most parents and carers say that the school deals effectively with any bullying and inspection findings agree with this. Students report that they feel safe from any significant threat of bullying and they feel very happy and secure in school.

Students have good attitudes to work. They are enthusiastic learners, strongly focussed on achieving challenging targets. They settle well to their work and persevere with extended tasks or challenging problems. They adopt a very responsible approach when evaluating the work of other students.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Senior leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the improvements in teaching that are needed to raise standards. They gain this from their analysis of the extensive data they keep about the progress of all groups of students and from their systematic monitoring of teaching across the school. They have sharply focused plans to bring about the necessary improvements and, when implemented, these have a positive impact on students' achievement. The embedding of these improvements in the work of all subject departments is slowed by the lack of a consistently strong contribution from subject leaders. This means that despite the strong drive and effectiveness in the work of senior leaders, the school has a satisfactory capacity to raise standards further.

The variability in the work of subject leaders is largely due to recent staffing turbulence, the effect of which is that some key posts have only recently been filled, or are about to be, as is the case in mathematics. Senior leaders do their best to fill the gaps and, in addition, they provide a systematic programme of professional development for staff, often involving very worthwhile joint activities with partner schools. This work has undoubtedly improved the quality of teaching, but not to the extent that there is consistently strong practice in all subject departments. The governing body provides good support and challenge to the senior leadership team in accelerating the pace of school improvement.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on academic courses and these are effectively adapted for students of all abilities. School leaders recognise the need to cater for a wider range of aspirations and are introducing more vocational courses. Work in many subjects makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This includes, for example, empathy with people facing catastrophe, making moral decisions about theft or crime and punishment, learning about other cultures and beliefs and the values required for harmonious living in a diverse society. The daily tutor time makes an insufficient contribution to such aspects of personal development. Overall, the school's curriculum and teaching makes a satisfactory contribution to tackling discrimination and to students' equality of opportunity.

The governing body is working very hard with the senior leadership team to improve the school's partnership with parents and carers. The high priority they are giving this is

validated by parents' and carers' responses to the inspection questionnaire. Around a quarter to a third of the respondents say that the school does not keep them well informed, does not help them to support their child's learning and takes too little notice of their concerns. The governing body and school leaders are now more actively seeking the views of parents and carers and responding to their concerns. For example, recent meetings have been arranged to update parents and carers on the staffing situation and life in the new school. The governing body and school leaders also work together effectively to ensure that the school meets requirements for keeping the students safe.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Penistone Grammar School, Sheffield, S36 7BX

Thank you very much indeed for your help when I came with my colleagues to inspect your school. We found our discussion with you very useful in helping us to make the judgement that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education.

You make satisfactory progress in most of your subjects between Year 7 and Year 11, then you make good progress in the sixth form. You make particularly good progress in geography and physical education throughout school, but your progress needs to be better in mathematics. You are quickly developing the very important skills of working independently and solving problems through team work. Your responsible approach to managing your own behaviour creates an excellent climate for learning in classrooms. Many of you told us that you feel free from any significant threat of bullying and we could see how well students get on together. This makes your school a very pleasant place to visit.

You told us how much better school life and work is since you moved into the new building. The Principal and staff are very keen to make your education better still so we have agreed with them the most important areas to work on:

- to make all of the teaching as challenging and interesting as the best in your school
- to give you more opportunities to develop your numeracy skills in all subjects
- to make sure that your tutor time helps you to extend your personal and social skills.

I am confident that you will support your teachers in making these improvements by continuing to work as hard as you do now. My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector

