

Penarth Group School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The Penarth Group independent day special school opened in 2007 in Stockport, Cheshire and provides for boys and girls between the ages of seven and 16 years. There are currently nine students on roll, aged between 12 and 16 years, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs for emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most have had turbulent domestic lives and all have presented challenging behaviour in their previous schools. The school's long term aim is 'to nurture confident individuals and responsible citizens, who can lead safe and happy lives and who will make a positive contribution to society'. The school is part of the Penarth Group and the headteacher is responsible to the group's proprietor. The school was last inspected in March 2009.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education based on an outstanding curriculum which meets its aims and enables every student to make good progress and to find an area of success. Parents, carers and placing authorities are entirely positive about the provision made by the school and the quality of communication between the school, families and local authorities. Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding, including comprehensive risk assessments and personal supervision at all times. The safeguarding of students is given a high priority and staff are all trained appropriately and fulfil their responsibilities consistently. The school has demonstrated steady improvement since the last inspection and meets all the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The school provides an outstanding curriculum which is carefully planned to meet the individual needs of students. Appropriate priority is given to improving the standards of students' literacy and numeracy and in providing them with good opportunities to achieve external accreditation, including GCSE. Students also have access to a range of humanities subjects which broaden their awareness of the local, national and international communities. In addition, the weekly timetable ensures that academic learning is balanced appropriately with practical learning experiences. All the

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

required areas of learning are provided, including practical experiences of science, art, music, cooking, information and communication technology, sports and outdoor activities. The curriculum for each individual takes full account of the requirements of their statements of special educational needs. Each student has an individual education plan which identifies suitable targets and strategies to assist them in making progress towards their targets.

An effective programme of personal, social and health education provides students with good opportunities for reflection and self-review in a sensitive way which encourages them to take responsibility for their own decisions. Good attention is given to the need to prepare students for life beyond school. A variety of vocational and work-related activities is provided in response to individual needs. Great care is taken to capitalise on personal interests and potential career choices. These practical activities also enable students to achieve external accreditation in BTEC, life skills and unit awards. Students have enjoyed individual experiences, for example, in beauty therapy, floristry, brazing and construction trades. Planning for individual lessons is derived from appropriate medium-term subject plans which ensure that there is continuity in the learning experiences provided in each subject. The in-school curriculum is enhanced with an excellent range of curriculum-related visits, for example, to local museums, the theatre, and to both the university and airport in Manchester. The breadth of the curriculum is highly successful in ensuring that students who have often had limited life experiences and low aspirations are challenged to take on new interests and to extend their horizons.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers plan interesting activities, using a variety of suitable resources and take account of the individual learning styles and motivation of students. Teachers are flexible in the implementation of their lesson plans and respond appropriately to the changing moods and engagement of their students. Lessons mostly proceed at a good pace and students are challenged to maintain their concentration and commitment. The staff ensure that students are continuously aware of the external awards available for study of the various subjects and encourage students to progress through unit awards, functional skills accreditation and on to GCSE. Occasionally, the objectives and subject content set for a lesson are not sufficiently challenging and learning does not proceed at an appropriate pace to ensure that students reach the standards of which they are capable. All staff adopt an encouraging style which is used effectively to maintain motivation and to ensure that students complete the required tasks.

As a result of the high quality of the curriculum and good teaching, students make good progress in their learning. Individual students leaving school at the end of Year 11 have achieved external qualifications ranging from Level 1 Adult Literacy and Numeracy to a range of GCSE passes, including four subjects at higher grades. These outcomes reflect good progress from generally low starting points. All leavers have gone on to further education, employment or training. The school has effective procedures for the assessment of students' progress, including the use of National Curriculum levels in the core subjects and the criteria of the awarding bodies for external examinations. Assessment data for the students currently on roll

demonstrate good progress, with examples of exceptional progress for some students. Given the personal challenges encountered throughout their schooling this represents creditable achievement as a result of the provision made by the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Students, on entry to the school have typically experienced disruption and a lack of continuity in their education and relationships. The school provides a safe and supportive environment in which students begin to address their challenging behaviour and respond positively to the expectations of the school. Attendance is good and students mostly demonstrate enjoyment of their classroom and off-site learning opportunities. Staff have a universally encouraging and supportive manner when talking to students, explaining the plans for lessons and discussing progress with their learning and behaviour. Students respond with respect towards adults in the school and recognise the care and attention to their needs which are displayed continuously. Students sometimes struggle to manage their anger and frustration. In these situations the staff intervene sensitively and take appropriate action to ensure that the learning of others is not disrupted. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and students cooperate with the expectations of staff.

There are good opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the community beyond the school. They are supported well in taking part in new activities in the community, such as shopping, using public transport and making appropriate use of sports and leisure facilities. Off-site visits and citizenship themes throughout the curriculum develop students' awareness and appreciation of the public institutions and services which affect their lives both locally and nationally. The curriculum in humanities subjects, cookery and personal, social and health education, extends their experience of different cultures, beliefs and lifestyles in a manner which helps to develop tolerance and respect for diversity. Pastoral support for personal development is integrated very effectively with daily classroom routines and learning activities.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of students. Due to the vulnerability of students and the continuous challenges which they face in their daily lives, staff meet at the start and end of each day to review provision and to plan precisely to meet the current needs of individuals. This strong focus on individual needs, together with a range of appropriate risk assessments and suitable staff training, for example in child protection and first aid, ensures the safeguarding of each student. Levels of individual supervision are outstanding without being overbearing. The school provides extensive opportunities and instruction to assist students with the development of healthy lifestyles. Weekly physical education lessons and outdoor activities, together with the residential camp are popular with students and provide them with challenging physical activities.

Healthy lifestyles are further encouraged through, for example, work on body image, internet safety, sexual health and drugs awareness.

Students state that they feel safe in school. Each student has a personal risk management plan and staff deal expertly with any indications that a student is experiencing difficulty in managing relationships or personal anxiety. School policies for child protection, behaviour management and the prevention of bullying take full account of recent government guidance and are implemented consistently by all staff. The school has a strongly integrated approach to policy implementation, recording of events, monitoring of trends, and strategies for improvement so that its welfare policies are very actively implemented. Arrangements for health and safety within the premises and on off-site visits, together with a systematic approach to all aspects of fire safety, result in a safe learning environment. The school has produced an accessibility plan which meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has appropriate procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and proprietors to work with young people and implements these consistently. All the required details of checks on staff are recorded in a suitable single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is located in a detached house which has been suitably adapted to provide sufficient classrooms of adequate size for the small teaching groups. The premises provide a safe and secure environment for effective learning. The accommodation is well used to enable students to take an active part in practical learning, for example, in art, cookery, design and technology and music. The external play area is of sufficient size for daily play and recreation, and good use is made of off-site facilities to provide a range of sporting and outdoor experiences.

Provision of information

The school provides all the required information for parents, carers and placing authorities through its prospectus. Parents and carers have access to the full range of school policies. Annual reports for parents and carers include suitable information about any awards achieved together with a written summary of progress in individual subjects. Parents, carers and placing authorities who responded to the inspection questionnaire stated their satisfaction with the school's provision and many specifically commented on the good quality of communication and working relationships with homes and families.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's arrangements for the management of any complaints meet regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that lesson objectives and content always have a consistently high level of challenge appropriate to the capabilities of each student
- maintain an appropriate pace throughout all lessons in order to ensure that challenging objectives are achieved.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent day school		
Type of school	Special school		
Date school opened	2007		
Age range of pupils	7–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 3	Total: 9
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 6	Girls: 3	Total: 9
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 2	Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,000		
Address of school	25 Buxton Road Hazel Grove Stockport Cheshire SK7 6AD		
Telephone number	0161 4831212		
Email address	headteacher@penarthgroup.co.uk		
Headteacher	Allan Scorer		
Proprietor	Patricia Swallow		

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.



28 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Penarth Group School, Stockport, SK7 6AD

Thank you for your welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit, including the opportunity to see you at work and to talk with a number of you about your experiences. The inspection judged that the Penarth Group School provides you with a good quality of education and helps you with both your academic and personal development. I was particularly pleased to see:

- that those of you who completed questionnaires recognise that you attend a good school and that you are taught well
- that your attendance is good and that you take an active part in your lessons
- the good opportunities provided for you to improve your English and mathematics
- the good progress which many of you are making in a number of subjects, including success in external examinations
- the good efforts you are making to improve your behaviour and to cooperate with your teachers
- the range of activities provided for you through sports, visits to places of interest and outdoor activities.

To bring about further improvement I have asked the proprietor and staff to continue to develop the school by making sure that lessons always have a sufficient level of challenge, and are always taught at a good pace with no distractions. You can help to get the best out of your school by making sure that you continue to respect the staff and make the most of the excellent range of opportunities provided by the school.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Young
Lead Inspector