

# Penwortham Girls' High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119765
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379885
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Shirley Gornall HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	666
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lorimer Russell-Hayes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Pomeroy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Cop Lane Penwortham Preston PR1 0SR
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Shirley Gornall  
Kathryn Pink  
Charles Lowry  
Helen Gaunt

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Additional inspector  
Ofsted secondee  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons taught by 36 teachers. Twelve of these were joint observations with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited two assemblies, several tutorial sessions and a sporting event organised by Year 10 students for pupils representing local primary schools. Discussions were held with the school's leaders, staff, groups of students, four members of the governing body, including its Chair, and an adviser from the local authority. Inspectors observed the work of the school and considered a variety of documents including the school improvement plan, self-evaluation document, monitoring reports and safeguarding records. Inspectors scrutinised a sample of students' exercise books and considered the school's analysis of students' progress. In addition 270 questionnaires completed by parents and carers were analysed, along with 98 from students and 52 from staff.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It draws students from rural and urban communities in south Ribble and Preston city centre and is the only maintained non-selective girls' school in Lancashire. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Proportionally more students are from minority-ethnic groups than is the case nationally; most of these students are from Asian backgrounds and speak English as an additional language, although very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils supported by school action is very low and by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average. Around 10% of students join or leave the school at times other than the normal transition points. The school has had specialist status for humanities and music since 2007. In addition, it holds the International Schools award, Cultural Diversity Quality Standard (diamond), Artsmark (gold) and Parental Engagement Quality Standard (silver). Several departments have received The Prince's Teaching Institute Marks in recognition of their practice; these include English, history, geography and modern foreign languages. The school is a member of the South Ribble Learning Federation. The headteacher took up her position in September 2011 following the retirement of her predecessor. The school's performance meets the government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- Penwortham Girls' High School is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because teaching has not secured consistently rapid progress in all subjects. The school is improving quickly and the vast majority of students, parents and carers are extremely positive about the quality of education and care it provides.
- Achievement is good. Students attain high standards in most subjects and the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is well above the national average. Students make outstanding progress in English. Their progress in mathematics has been similar to the national average but is now accelerating.
- Teaching is good and increasingly consistent. Teachers are dedicated, knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Most lessons provide well balanced challenge and appropriate support for students. There is some variability in the effectiveness of teachers' questioning and in their provision of opportunities for students to work independently.
- Behaviour is outstanding and the school is very safe. Most students display a voracious appetite for learning and thoroughly enjoy all that the school has to offer. They contribute actively to the inclusive and harmonious ethos that pervades the school.
- Leadership is good. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for students' success and performance management arrangements are rigorous. The new headteacher has secured the confidence of the school community and brought about significant, positive change. A clear, sustained focus on developing teaching has led to improved achievement. Leaders have identified the most effective teaching in school but have not yet fully developed a staff development programme for sharing and building upon outstanding practice. The school's self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. Some improvement plans are imprecise and lack clear success criteria.

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

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that students make consistently good or outstanding progress by:
  - improving questioning in order to deepen students' thinking and reflection
  - developing further opportunities for students to learn independently.
- Share and build upon the outstanding practice that exists within school through a tailored approach to the continuing professional development of all staff.
- Refine improvement planning at all levels to include clear, measurable outcomes in relation to the school's key priorities.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers think that students achieve well at the school, and inspectors agree with them. Girls join the school with attainment that is significantly higher than that found nationally, although there is some variability in prior attainment between year groups. They make good progress in most subjects and leave having secured GCSE results that are significantly above average. The proportion of students attaining A\* and A grades has increased and is well above average in English, English literature, art, geography, physics, citizenship and religious studies. Girls make consistently outstanding progress in English irrespective of their starting points and they explain that this is due to the, 'passion for their subject' that their English teachers communicate. Girls' progress in mathematics has been closer to that found nationally. Inspection evidence, including the results secured by girls in recent examinations, confirms that progress in mathematics is accelerating and results are rising. The progress made by students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is similar with that made by their peers. Girls with an Indian heritage make particularly rapid progress.

The school aspires to develop, 'articulate, questioning, tolerant and independent' young women and there is considerable evidence of its success in fostering these characteristics. Students' personal development is strong; they readily express informed opinions and have a mature understanding of how they learn best. Their literacy skills are particularly well-developed and underpin their high achievement in English and humanities subjects, where they write extended and thoughtful responses. Many students are avid, critical readers. They speak fluently and write accurately, adapting their language for a range of purposes and audiences. Most girls are confident users of information and communication technology. Girls' numeracy skills are generally good, and improving, in response to the school's focus on embedding them across the curriculum.

### Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall, with an increasing amount that is outstanding and a small proportion that is satisfactory. Girls and their parents and carers regard teaching as being of good quality. This is typified by one parent who stated, 'Teachers know individuals well and

willingly go the extra mile to help them learn.’ Teaching is consistently very effective in English and humanities subjects where high expectations permeate and girls challenge themselves to achieve their best. Reading skills are taught particularly well in these subjects. For example, an excellent discussion about Jane Austen’s descriptive language provided an effective basis for girls to improve their own creative writing. In another outstanding lesson, girls hypothesised about the multiple layers of meaning in a contemporary poem and considered the power of embedded quotation in expressing their responses succinctly. In religious studies, Year 7 students showed a high level of understanding of different faiths as they made responses to various pictorial images. They demonstrated that they were learning from each other in developing their cultural understanding. Outstanding GCSE revision lessons in geography were well-paced and highly engaging, culminating in students completing a challenging word game to demonstrate their use of geographical terminology. Girls also made excellent progress in practical lessons, such as developing their batting skills in rounders or developing and testing toppings for savoury scones. Insightful questioning and very effective adaptation of tasks to meet the needs of individual students characterised all of these lessons.

Where teaching is only satisfactory, girls work hard and positive relationships between students and teachers are apparent. However, questioning does not extend their thinking to the depth that is achieved in better lessons and opportunities for girls to reflect on their achievements and consider how to improve their work are underdeveloped. The school has worked hard to increase the range of opportunities students have to work independently but there is a tendency in some lessons for teachers to restrict challenge or provide too much information so that there is less scope for girls to find things out for themselves.

The support provided for students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is extremely well coordinated and very effective in boosting their self-esteem, independence and progress. Several members of the ‘impact’ group spoke positively of the effectiveness of additional help they received. Girls whose reading skills are comparatively weak benefit from a well-targeted intervention programme that boosts their confidence and competence as readers and accelerates their progress in other subjects.

Teachers’ marking is generally regular, helpful and includes a balance of praise and improvement points. Students act upon their teachers’ feedback and state that they find their comments very helpful. Students are also skilled at assessing their own and each other’s work.

Leaders recognise that there have been insufficient opportunities for teachers and students to use information and communication technology in lessons and this aspect of provision is now being addressed through investment in resources and staff training. Students enjoyed using laptop computers in modern foreign languages to improve their reading and spelling skills.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students’ outstanding behaviour is a major strength of the school. The overwhelming majority of girls are courteous, cooperative and adept at managing themselves in lessons and during social times. They relish learning and make a strong contribution to the leadership of the school, including through their active involvement in the school council. At the girls’ request, head girl and prefect posts have been reintroduced and the opportunities for girls to take personal responsibility have been broadened. Many girls in Year 10 are

junior sports leaders and their impressive organisation of a sports programme for local primary schools testified to their maturity, self-confidence and friendliness. Most parents and carers agree that the behaviour of girls is good. A few expressed individual concerns that were explored by inspectors. They found that the incidence of disruption to learning is extremely rare and that students with identified behavioural needs are sensitively and effectively managed so that their achievement is rising. Fixed-term exclusion from the school is very unusual. Most staff use the school's behaviour policy consistently and the rewards system is valued by students.

Attendance levels for all groups of students are above average and are rising. Very few students are persistently absent. Virtually all girls arrive promptly to lessons, are attentive, hardworking and take great care to present their work neatly. Students readily lead assemblies and through these opportunities demonstrate their good social, moral and cultural development. They are very aware of safety and appreciative of the improvements that have been made to minimise risks on the school site. Girls state that the strength of their relationships with their peers and their tolerant attitudes mean that bullying in any form is very rare. They have confidence in the staff's ability to deal with any such situations, should they occur. As one girl stated, 'At this school, there is an expectation that we are caring and compassionate and so that's how we live.'

### **Leadership and management**

'The gifted and driven headteacher has made a considerable number of changes in a short space of time to improve the school in a number of ways.' This comment made by one staff member was echoed by many others who confirmed that the morale of the school community is high and that the school's priorities are known and actively supported. The headteacher has strengthened accountability, challenged performance and improved management information at a swift pace, while retaining the support and commitment of her staff. Leaders at all levels have a clear focus on raising girls' achievement and providing them with the best possible care and guidance. Their success is evidenced in the acceleration of girls' progress. The leadership of teaching is robust. School leaders have a comprehensive and accurate picture of teachers' performance, which is managed effectively. The repertoire of teaching styles has been enhanced through in-service training, although the school's strategy for sharing the outstanding practice it has identified is at an early stage of development. Leadership roles have been reconfigured and opportunities provided for more staff to contribute directly to leading improvement. Subject leaders and learning coordinators value the clarity and openness of the new management systems and expectations. The school's self-evaluation is based on wide-ranging activities and takes account of the perceptions of students, parents and carers. Improvement planning at whole school and departmental levels is focused on ambitious strategic aims but lacks precise, measurable success criteria.

The school's curriculum is of good quality. Girls make a smooth transition from their primary schools as a result of a carefully constructed programme and nurturing principles. They enjoy the broad range of subjects and experiences the school provides and feel well prepared for further study when they leave. The GCSE programme is complemented by vocational provision for individual students offered through local partnerships. The school has embarked on a curriculum review with the aim of extending the range of subjects to broaden girls' experience of the performing arts. The moral, social and cultural dimensions of learning are promoted strongly through the formal curriculum. Girls debate ethical issues seriously, for instance in history through their study of the causes and consequences of war.

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They demonstrate commitment to the principles of fair trading and are actively involved, through music, art and religious education, in the exploration of cultural influences. Opportunities for spiritual reflection are less well developed. The school offers an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities which, as one girl put it, 'offers everyone the chance to follow their interests and have fun'.

The school's governing body runs efficiently and effectively. Governors are fully aware of the school's priorities and use their individual skills and expertise to support its development. They are rigorous and insightful in their analysis of the school's performance and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and contribute to the overwhelming majority of students feeling safe. Equality of opportunity is strongly and effectively promoted through the school's policies and practice. No groups of students underachieve in the school. No form of harassment or discrimination is tolerated. The school's success in tackling weaknesses identified at its previous inspection, raising achievement and strengthening leadership indicate that it has good capacity for future development.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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](http://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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.**



31 May 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Penwortham Girls' High School, Preston, PR1 0SR**

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks to those of you who gave up your time to join discussions with inspectors and to those of you who completed the questionnaire. We enjoyed observing your work in lessons and experiencing the exciting sports day led by Year 10 Junior Sports Leaders for primary school pupils.

We judged Penwortham Girls' High to be a good school that is making rapid improvements. Your achievement is good. You attain high standards at GCSE and leave school with qualifications that equip you well for the next stage in your life. Your progress is particularly impressive in English and it is accelerating in mathematics. Your achievements are due to good teaching by your dedicated and enthusiastic teachers and the impressive commitment to learning that you display. Your behaviour is outstanding, your attendance is high and you willingly contribute to improving the school.

Your school is well led and your new headteacher, ably supported by the senior team, is bringing about improvements to your school in an effective way; taking account of your feedback. We see no reason why your school should not become even better and we have suggested several things to help this process. Firstly, we think teaching can be further improved so that even more lessons are outstanding. We have asked that more teachers use the sort of probing questioning that occurs in the best lessons to deepen your thinking. We have also asked them to provide even more opportunities for you to work independently. Secondly, the school's improvement planning should be strengthened so that leaders and teachers have clear success criteria against which to measure their work.

You told us how proud you are to be members of Penwortham Girls' High School and we know that you will continue to play an active part in shaping its development. On behalf of the inspectors, I wish you all the best for your future success.

Yours sincerely  
Shirley Gornall  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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