

Pent Valley Technology College

Surrenden Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 4ED

Inspection dates 24–25 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and achieve well. Progress accelerates as students move up through the school and they achieve particularly well in English.
- Teaching in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, is good.
- Students' behaviour around the school is good. Their conduct, manners and punctuality are good. They are courteous to adults, welcoming to visitors and generally respectful of one another.
- The headteacher and members of the governing body have a clear vision for the direction of the school. They have a well-defined and effective strategy to raise standards of teaching and achievement to the very highest levels.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress at A level. Relationships and behaviour of sixth formers are a positive influence on younger students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- On occasions, teachers do not tailor lesson tasks and homework closely enough to students' individual needs.
- Although there have been recent marked improvements, attendance remains below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 48 lessons or part-lessons, involving most teachers. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders, including the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, including senior and middle managers, members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice Chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- They observed the school’s work, including the extensive provision it makes for disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- They looked at a number of documents, including information about safeguarding, the school’s own data on students’ current progress and parents’ and carers’ views, its self-evaluation and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students’ behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors observed books in lessons as well as a substantial selection made at random in order to help evaluate the progress made by students over time.

Inspection team

Haydn Evans, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional Inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional Inspector
Janice Howkins	Additional Inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional Inspector
Cosmos Charles	Shadow Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above average-sized, non-selective mixed secondary school that provides for a sixth form.
- Most students are of White British heritage but there is a growing number from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students supported by the student premium (looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well above average, as is the number supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative provision other than its own off-site facilities, nor is it dependent upon other local schools in providing for its sixth form.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve levels of attendance so that they are in line with or exceed those nationally by:
 - targeting identified persistent absentees for home visits
 - prioritising less frequent absentees for early morning telephone calls and text messages to parents.
- Move the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all learning tasks are carefully tailored to meet the needs of individual students
 - matching homework tasks more precisely to students' individual learning needs, particularly the most able students in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students is good

- Students join the school with attainment that is well below the national average. They make good progress, so that by the end of Year 11, they reach broadly average standards.
- The improving examination results are closely linked to the raised expectations that senior leaders have of teaching and achievement. The school's tracking data indicate that students are on course to build on these improvements in both 2013 and 2014.
- Students are encouraged to read as often as possible. Those in Year 9 receive regular teacher-supported lessons on literacy and this provides the platform for further development and progress in Key Stage 4. In one lesson, students made good progress in completing activities that were designed to improve their vocabulary and use of connectives.
- Just under a third of students are entered for GCSE examinations early and if they do not get an A or A* grade, they are allowed to continue to work to improve their grades until the end of Year 11.
- The rapidly increasing rates of progress are confirmed by school projections. These are based upon early entry and tracking information on students' progress. Evidence gathered on inspection through scrutiny of exercise books demonstrates that students make good progress over time.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well, particularly in vocational courses. Students with statements of special educational needs reach standards higher than those for similar students nationally.
- There is an improving trend in attainment over three years in the sixth form, and the gap between that of the boys and the girls is closing, particularly at A2. The main strengths are in BTEC and vocational courses, including home economics. Students tend to do less well in more academic courses such as politics and science.
- Students who are eligible for pupil premium funding achieve well. Although their average point scores in examinations are lower than those for all students nationally, the school is successfully narrowing the gap year on year between these students and others.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects is typically good. It is characterised by effective planning and the sequencing of activities that are well matched to learning needs. This is supported by rigorous assessment in which errors are corrected and detailed comments made to help students identify what they need to do next in order to improve their attainment.
- Teachers make effective use of individual targets for students throughout the key stages, which helps to accelerate the pace of learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used to enrich teachers' explanations, particularly in mathematics, science and history, where it helps to engage students and sustain their interest throughout the lesson.
- In the best lessons, teachers skilfully questioned and challenged students in order to develop explanations to improve their learning and understanding. Students were encouraged to be active in their learning, collaborating with their peers. For example, in a mathematics lesson where students were given a code to break by linking numbers to letters, they worked enthusiastically in collaboration and quickly developed their understanding of a number line. It also helped develop their concept of negative numbers.
- In a few lessons, learning was not always matched closely enough to students' needs and abilities.
- Teachers give students good advice and guidance about the quality of their work, both orally and in written comments. Consequently, students know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve, and this is enhancing their confidence to learn by themselves.

- Teachers aim to use homework tasks that match students' individual learning needs. However, this does not always happen in the case of the most able, and particularly in the case of sixth form learners. There are occasions when they are not fully extended or challenged sufficiently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students typically have good attitudes to learning, as shown in lessons, including when they have to complete tasks on their own. This makes a strong contribution to their improving achievement.
- Behaviour in the vast majority of classes is good, and in the off-site vocational lessons provided by the school, behaviour was outstanding.
- Parents, staff and students have reported positive opinions about both behaviour and safety at the school.
- Students' behaviour around the school is good. Their conduct, manners and punctuality are admirable. They are courteous to adults, welcoming to visitors and generally respectful of one another. Although there was some boisterous behaviour by a small minority of students, for the vast majority behaviour in the dining halls, for example, was orderly, respectful and perfectly safe yet was free from overt supervision by senior leaders.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying, and think that it is not a threat in their school. They feel confident that any concerns they might have would be dealt with effectively by the adults at the school.
- Students feel safe at the school and parents agree with this. Students benefit from very clear guidance on how to keep themselves and others safe, which is communicated to them through their lessons and assemblies.
- Students have positive attitudes to their learning and are generally punctual to school and to their lessons. Although improving, attendance rates are below average, mainly because of a very small minority of persistent absentees.
- Sixth form students have mature attitudes and good manners and are good role models for the younger students.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a determined strategic thinker with a clear vision for the school that is shared by the governing body. This is illustrated by the school's approach to performance management, based upon accountability that is systematically linked through teaching, learning and pay to training.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team are uncompromising in their approach to 'narrowing the gap' and improving the achievement and personal development of all students. This is illustrated by the success of the school in improving attainment over the past three years as well as that projected for the near future.
- Good teaching practices are underpinned by accurate monitoring, effective performance management and training. These are closely matched to the needs of the school and individual staff. Senior leaders have identified areas for development and are intent on generating further improvement, for example by systematically reducing teaching loads to give staff more opportunities to observe best practice.
- Self-evaluation is well structured and the school's review strategies and quality assurance are implemented each term. This self-evaluation is validated annually by an experienced and well-established external consultancy to ensure that it is accurate.
- Governors regularly challenge senior leaders. This is based on their involvement with the quality assurance checks that take place each term and the regular visits of the Chair of the Governing Body to the school. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement, both of which are improving.

- The school's curriculum is well organised and changes have been made to meet the needs of all groups of students: for example transition and vocational and academic learning are well provided for. Students with moderate learning difficulties and others with special educational needs and disabilities are also well supported. All of this is having a positive impact on results. Curriculum enrichment, including a broad range of team activities, visits and community-based projects like the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, contribute well to the students' achievement and especially to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school works well with parents, as indicated by the positive response from Parent View, showing that, in a very small sample, all of the parents would recommend the school to others.
- The school's success in challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity is seen in the increasingly good progress made by all groups of students and the narrowing attainment gap between those eligible for pupil premium funding and the rest of the students.
- **The governance of the school is highly effective:**
 - Governors have a clear vision for their role in school improvement. They make effective use of progress data to check the impact of teaching on raising students' attainment. They have received the relevant training to enable them to fulfil their statutory duties and to support the school in this respect. They oversee the efficient management of financial resources, with a clear aim of deploying staff and resources to most effectively meet the needs of the students at the school. Governors have a clear overview of performance management systems and check that pay progression takes account of teachers' individual achievements in relation to their targets. They are strongly supportive of the school's strategy for narrowing the attainment gap between different groups of students and have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching at the school. Governors monitor the use of the pupil premium funding in providing additional support for students and training for teachers, so that the progress of looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that of the rest of the school and continues to improve.

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	118930
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401796

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

Type of school	Non-selective
School category	Maintained
Age range of students	11–18
Gender of students	Mixed
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	1060
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	257
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Parker
Headteacher	Mario Citro
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 May 2010
Telephone number	01303 277161
Fax number	01303 279342
Email address	mario.citro@pent-valley.kent.sch.uk

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