

Penketh High School

Heath Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2BY

Inspection dates 31 March–1 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	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

- Achievement is not consistently good. Students' progress and GCSE results in mathematics were too low in 2014.
- Teaching is not consistently good across all subjects and leaders work to improve it has met with only partial success. The high staff turnover in some departments has led to inconsistency in teachers' assessments of some students' progress.
- Activities undertaken to improve the performance of those students supported by the pupil premium funding are not monitored rigorously by leaders and governors to ensure good value for money.
- The sixth form requires improvement as leaders have not reduced the variability in the quality of teaching between subjects in the sixth form. In a small number of these subjects students achieve A-level results that are below expectations.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff in all subjects expect the highest standards of students' behaviour for learning. As a result, some students do not work as hard as they can and do not reach their full potential.
- Students' attendance and punctuality including within the sixth form remains too low.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's work to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures good skills in these areas and that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Support for the well-being and academic development of those students with special educational needs is successful in improving outcomes for these students.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Leaders and managers have ensured students' reading skills have rapidly improved in all years, and especially in Years 7 and 8, demonstrating their capacity to improve the school.
- The arts provision in the school is particularly strong. Students reach very good skill levels in all areas of the arts due to good-quality teaching and a broad range of experiences and opportunities for further development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across the curriculum, an assembly and several reading sessions. Five lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised an extensive sample of pupils' work in books, some jointly with senior leaders. More than 200 books were seen over the two days from across the curriculum, but especially mathematics books.
- Meetings were held with groups of students in all years, those with special educational needs and disabilities and representatives from the sixth form. Meetings were held with representatives from the governing body, with a representative from the local authority, and with senior staff in the school.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance, plans and actions for improvement and information on the leadership of teaching, assessment of learning and of behaviour.
- Inspectors took account of the 106 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 82 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Rebecca Lawton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector
Stephen Wall	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Penketh High School is a slightly larger than average-sized secondary school with an on-site sixth form.
- The school converted to academy status in April 2013, but retained the name 'school'.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding for those students eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority, is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students who have special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average. The small number the school does support have significant needs and a new on-site unit, the Orchard Centre, is supporting a small number of students with specialist provision.
- There are a small number of students who attend alternative provision at a number of different sites including the New Horizon pupil referral unit.
- Since the school became an academy there have been significant changes in staffing and in leadership.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.
- The achievement in the sixth form did not meet the national interim standards in 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement in mathematics in Years 7 to 11 and improve the success of re-sits in GCSE English and mathematics for those in the sixth form.
- Reduce the variability in teaching, so that all is consistently good or better by:
 - improving the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment and feedback to students
 - improving students' attitudes to learning by increasing expectations and challenge in lessons.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
 - improving the usefulness of information gathered on students' progress to inform school action plans
 - increasing the rigour of the monitoring of teaching so as to intervene quickly to reduce the impact of weaker teaching, or of staffing changes, on students' progress.
- Continue to improve attendance and punctuality, including within the sixth form.
- Improve the rigour of actions taken by leaders in the sixth form to reduce variability in student achievement and improve the support given to students to match them to appropriate courses.

An external review of the schools use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- There has been a staffing restructure since the transition to academy status and this has led to significant changes in the way that the school is led and managed. New leaders of curriculum areas have recently been appointed, but some have yet to demonstrate significant impact on the standards students reach.
- The headteacher has tried to significantly raise expectations of the levels students can achieve across the school. This has been more successful in some departments than others. Some departments have had significant staffing absence and this has slowed the progress of initiatives in these areas.
- Achievement in English has been maintained in line with national averages over time, but results in mathematics dipped in 2014. Significant numbers of new and short-term staff in mathematics has meant that improvements that have been made in some classes and years are less secure in others. Overall, students' progress in and monitoring of teaching in mathematics requires improvement so that all is as good as the best. The local authority have been monitoring progress and have been challenging the school to improve teaching and learning in this department.
- Leaders have correctly identified the areas of the school that need to improve and have put in place strategies to address these areas. Some improvements have been made, for example to improve students' reading skills. However, not all departments have good-quality action plans with clear strategies for improvement, as some middle leaders are very new to post.
- The school gathers a large body of information on students' progress. This information is not always used effectively to inform teachers' planning or to inform the monitoring of teaching and learning so that weaker performance is tackled quickly.
- Leadership in the sixth form has not yet eradicated the variability in performance across subjects, or ensured that all students are correctly matched to courses. For example, one subject switched from an A level to a BTEC half way through the course when it was found that the course did not meet students' needs. Leadership of the sixth form requires improvement so that students are better matched to courses to enable them to succeed and make informed choices about their future and actions are taken more quickly when issues arise.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes good coverage of spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements. The cultural life of the school is a particular strength and students enjoy a rich experience across the arts and sports. The balance of vocational and academic courses is under continual scrutiny to meet changing student needs. The school also uses a wide range of alternative provision to meet the needs of those students with particular requirements.
- Leaders monitor rigorously the progress, attendance and behaviour of students who attend alternative provision. These students are making good progress from their starting points.
- The school's work to tackle discrimination is supported by all staff and the school's ethos is clear. All departments display the school's core principles, and regular assemblies reinforce the school's values, tackling discrimination and fostering good relations. However, past teaching has not ensured that all students have had an equal opportunity to succeed. The school is currently making determined efforts to address this imbalance.
- The school day has been extended so that sixth-form students have equitable access to teachers and departments. These sessions are well received by students, and extra-curricular clubs and activities are well attended. For example, the school has seven choirs, including a boys' choir that the students are proud of and were keen to discuss with inspectors.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching, but are not rigorous enough with checks for those teachers on short term, supply and cover contracts who may not fit easily into the school's structure for monitoring teaching. Some split classes, taught by different teachers on different days, are not monitored or supported well enough and some students in those classes do not make the same progress as their peers.
- In Key Stage 4, students are given good advice and guidance to make informed choices about their next steps.
- Leaders and governors give high priority to safeguarding and the school's systems to keep students safe meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not been robust enough in monitoring the spending of the pupil premium funding during a period of change to the leadership and accountability for the allocation of these funds. Not enough information about how value for money will be measured and evaluated has been requested or reported to governors.
 - Governors are well trained and are challenging the school to improve. They have an accurate view of

the school's performance from published data, but have less grasp on current, in-year teaching and progress as the school's information systems are overly complex and difficult to monitor. The governors have already requested a clearer report but this is not yet in place.

- Performance of all staff is managed systematically and governors are knowledgeable about the local and national picture for comparison of student progress and the quality of teaching. They have linked performance to pay and are rewarding good teaching and tackling underperformance. They have access to good-quality support and guidance and rigorously monitor students' safety.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Some students choose to complete less work or not challenge themselves to reach the highest levels of which they are capable and are not encouraged to improve this consistently by all staff.
- Around school students are generally well behaved. They open doors for one another and are friendly and confident. There is little graffiti or litter and students manage to work around the public path which runs through the school site with maturity and sensible precautions.
- The attendance and punctuality of students has improved but remains too low.
- In lessons there is a small amount of disruption, although this is managed well by staff. Students say they are not often interrupted and they follow the school's procedures for behaviour when directed.
- The staggered lunchtime is managed well and does not interrupt students' learning.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students are safe on site and on trips and visits and the school provides good-quality care and guidance to those in need of additional support.
- Students know how to stay safe online and have a good understanding of life in modern Britain. Additional sessions from the school's external partners, such as the staging of a mock car crash and demonstration of how the emergency services respond to accidents, highlights to students the importance of safe driving and the use of seatbelts. Democracy and the rule of law are covered well within the school's citizenship curriculum.
- Incidents of bullying are not frequent and students say they have confidence in the school to respond to any incidents or issues that may arise.
- Those students who attend alternative provision are safe and their achievement and well-being are regularly monitored by leaders to ensure continual improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching is not consistently good across all subjects.
- In some lessons, teachers do not use the school's policies and systems for marking work and giving regular feedback to students. Due to this, some students make better progress than others.
- Not all staff follow the school's system for identifying those at risk of underachieving and how to support students to improve. As a result a small number of students do not make the progress expected of them in mathematics.
- Reading is taught well. Students' progress in reading has improved rapidly as a result. Regular reading sessions have had a significantly positive impact across the school. Some teachers use these sessions to build students' literacy skills very effectively.
- Some teachers, particularly those new to the school or on short term contracts, do not use the school's assessment policies consistently. Leaders have not standardised teachers' judgements of progress and attainment. Some are too generous, others harsh. This means that the information used to judge students' progress and attainment is not always accurate.
- Teachers use questioning well to shape students' learning and to respond to their level of understanding within lessons. In most departments, teachers use good resources and create interesting lessons which generally engage students in their learning.
- Teaching in the English department is particularly successful and is improving students' progress. Literacy

across other subjects of the curriculum is less well developed and some students struggle with spelling accurately. Some departments have addressed this with clear strategies for sharing key words and by creating good displays to reinforce vocabulary.

- Teaching in mathematics has been affected by a large turnover of staff. Some classes have had a significant number of different teachers within one academic year. For these students, there has been some duplication of topics and some erratic shifts in topic to meet teacher needs rather than student needs. This has led to these groups not making the same progress as others.
- Some students do not make the progress of which they are capable. They are not consistently challenged to reach the highest levels or expected to complete the full amount of work that will enable them to succeed. For example, in two lessons seen during the inspection students were observed negotiating with staff to complete easier questions, or only complete half of the questions set.
- The teaching within the arts in school is particularly successful. Students have a wide and varied curriculum and develop skills across the arts which improve their confidence and understanding of other cultures well. The school provides a wide range of additional extra-curricular opportunities, trips and visitors who enrich the students' experiences.
- Teaching in the Orchard Centre for students who have additional learning needs is of a good quality and is helping these students to develop not only academic skills but also good social and moral skills. The support provided by teaching assistants in the Orchard Centre is particularly effective in helping the students who attend to make good progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the school with attainment that is in line with national averages. In 2014, the number of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE fell to below the national average, mostly due to a large number not gaining the grades expected in GCSE mathematics.
- Students' progress in English is in line with national expectations, but is below in mathematics.
- In 2014, the progress of disadvantaged students was below that of their classmates in English and well below their classmates in mathematics. The amount of progress made by disadvantaged students was below the national average for all students nationally in both subjects. This represented an increase in the gap between the progress of disadvantaged students in English and mathematics and their classmates from the previous year.
- Final GCSE results in 2014 showed that in English, disadvantaged students, in this school, were roughly half a grade below, and in mathematics more than a grade below the average that other students achieved nationally.
- Current progress suggests that this gap is closing but the variations in teacher assessment mean that predictions are not consistently reliable. Inspectors scrutinised a large number of students' mathematics books and tests and established that no groups of students are currently underachieving in mathematics.
- The funding to help those students in Year 7 who are behind to catch-up, and the funding to help disadvantaged students to close gaps in their achievement has been spent on systems and strategies that have proved to be successful in the past. However, current monitoring is not robust enough to show how much these strategies have improved students' progress and to gauge value for money.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations. Instead it uses a system of 'mock' exams to prepare students in advance of examinations and build their confidence.
- The very few students who speak English as an additional language are making good progress from their starting points.
- The most able students at the school achieve well and the proportions of higher ability students who exceed the progress expected of them are increasing.
- Current achievement in all year groups is stronger in some subjects than in others. Students do well in the arts and in subjects such as geography and history. Students make consistently good progress in their English lessons. In some classes, instability in staffing has resulted in slower progress for students in mathematics and science than for other students in different classes.
- Where the school has been able to secure consistent staffing, the student improvements to students' achievement in those classes are clear. Where there is still some disruption to the leadership or teaching of that subject, the school has not tackled the slower rates of progress in these classes well enough.
- The progress and attainment of students with disabilities or special educational needs is managed efficiently and these students are achieving well both in classes, in the on-site unit and at alternative provision. Their increased achievement reflects the school's effective work to be flexible and responsive to

the needs of these students.

- Students' progress in reading is particularly strong. The new strategies have secured good progress in all years, but particularly for younger students. These students say that the reading sessions have encouraged them to read more widely and more often. Sessions where teachers skilfully used these reading opportunities to embed literacy skills such as spelling, vocabulary and reading for meaning were seen during the inspection.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Students in the sixth form are well cared for and the school has arranged the school day to enable these students to have an additional lesson every day.
- The amount of progress students make varies too much between subjects, particularly between academic and vocational subjects. Leaders have not done enough to reduce this variability.
- Students in the arts make very good progress and the students' art work is displayed proudly around the school site. However, the standards students reach in mathematics and the sciences vary too widely and some students do not reach the levels they are capable of.
- Teaching in the sixth form is generally good, although in some departments prolonged staff absence has reduced the quality and consistency of teaching in some classes. This has led to some students not reaching the levels they are capable of in final examinations. Staff generally have good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations.
- Too few students are successful when re-sitting GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- In a small number of subjects, students have not been well advised and have had the qualification route changed part way through their course in order to better meet their needs. Guidance to help students to choose appropriate courses requires improvement.
- Students' attendance and punctuality requires improvement in the sixth form. Behaviour for learning in the sixth form requires improvement, as too many students are not reaching the highest levels of which they are capable. Teachers are too often grading some students as not putting in enough effort when tracking students' behaviour across the year.

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	139506
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	453457

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,154
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Holmes
Headteacher	Ben Dunne
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01925 722298
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