

The Peak Academy

Drake Lane, Dursley, Gloucestershire, GL11 5HD

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2015

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Inadequate | 4 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good. The strong leadership team has set a clear direction and ethos, which everyone follows.
- Students and their families have confidence in the staff and feel welcomed, supported and fully involved in school life.
- Staff consistently apply the school's policies and procedures. Teaching is reliably good or better, enabling students to make good progress.
- Attendance is improving because learning is more interesting and teaching has improved.
- All students leave the school with a place in education, training, apprenticeship or employment.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students learn how to behave, respecting themselves and each other. There have been no exclusions since November 2014.
- The school provides a safe and nurturing environment in which students blossom. They know what they can and cannot do, and how to improve their behaviour and raise their achievements.
- The achievement gap between those students eligible for the pupil premium and others is rapidly closing.
- Governance is good. Governors understand the needs of the students in the school and know about their achievements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some students do not attend school as often as they should.
- More-able students do not always have work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Middle leaders need to take more responsibility to ensure that teaching and achievement are outstanding in the areas that they lead.

Information about this inspection

- As at the previous inspection, this inspection was conducted jointly with the inspection of Greenfield Academy. This is because the students at The Peak Academy are taught alongside the students at the Greenfield Academy, under the same leadership, management and governance. Again, as previously, the lead inspectors worked closely together to support the leadership team in managing the two inspections and produced almost identical reports.
- The inspectors visited seven parts of lessons and looked at a selection of students' books. They also observed students at the start of the school day, during break and as they moved around the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the academy's information detailing students' current progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and finance.
- The inspectors held formal discussions with the senior leaders, a teacher new to the school, the head boy, the school council, three parents or carers, representatives from the governing body, the local community police officer, the police community support officer from 'Great Expectations', and the Chief Executive Officer of the White Horse Federation. Informal discussions were also held with students during the school day.
- An inspector inspected the school's annexe and the alternative provision used by the school. Meetings were held with staff and students at these sites and the students' books and work scrutinised.
- The 25 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, and 25 questionnaires returned from staff were taken into consideration.
- Evidence from previous monitoring visits was taken into account.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The Peak Academy was opened in September 2012 as part of a federation with Greenfield Academy. Both special schools were sponsored by Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). On 1 April 2015, the schools officially changed sponsor to the White Horse Federation (WHF).
- Both schools share the same location and website under the banner of the Peak Academy.
- This is a special school for students with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEHM). All students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan related to SEHM. Students often also have other additional difficulties, which have resulted in multiple permanent exclusions from other schools in the county.
- Since September 2014, almost all Year 11 students have been educated off site in alternative provision in an annexe several miles from the main school. The staff at the annexe are employed by the school. In addition, the school has previously made use of Bridge Training, Gloucester Young People, The Door Youth Project, the Launchpad, Gloucestershire Mentoring and Support (GMAS), and home tuition.
- A very small number of Year 10 students are educated off site at GMAS.
- The vast majority of students are boys.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- Just over 50% of students are eligible for support through the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students on the school's roll are correctly placed, attend and get the education to which they are entitled.
- Raise the achievement of more-able students by providing them with more challenging work.
- Improve the quality of middle leadership. Through further training and professional development, ensure that they take more responsibility for making teaching and students' achievement outstanding in the areas they lead.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Early on, the Principal quickly grasped what needed to be done to make this a good school. Consequently, he and his strong senior leadership team rapidly sought out and tackled significant weaknesses. Together, they continue to drive improvements. Inconsistencies in staff managing students' behaviour and providing at least good quality teaching have been resolved.
- Students, their families and staff are all rightly proud to be members of this school. They appreciate the tremendous amount of hard work that has gone on behind the scenes to enable the rapid changes in this school's provision. They are aware that more needs to be done as well as the current standards being sustained. They are ready, willing and able to meet the challenges ahead.
- Senior leaders have been instrumental in turning the fortunes of the school around. The appointment of good quality subject and area leaders has been an important staging post in the school's improvement journey. These middle leaders now need to take more responsibility for the areas they lead, including developing the vision as to what needs to be done to make their subject or area outstanding.
- The sponsors have provided good support through their own officers and by utilizing staff from other schools. The schools have benefited equally by being able to check each other's judgements and share what works best to raise standards in teaching, learning, leadership and management.
- Senior leaders, the governing body and the sponsors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. This expertise is informed by good quality information that is regularly collected and analysed so that all are clear about the progress that all students make and their achievements, attendance and behaviour.
- Close liaison and involvement with other agencies such as the police are helping to ensure that students are not drawn into gang or drug cultures. In addition, weekly visits by the local constable, helping students to learn about individual liberty and civil and criminal law are now affable, informal occasions rather than as previously when there was need to respond to calls for help to control outbursts of poor behaviour.
- Students are further well prepared for life in modern Britain through other aspects of the good and well-tailored curriculum. In personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and through assemblies, students are introduced to different cultures, traditions and festivals. As a result, students gain mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths. Students have recently been following the national election and replicated the process when appointing the new head boy.
- The school council acts as a good vehicle for sharing students' views. Students and parents feel welcomed in the school and appreciate the attractive school website, which contains lots of interesting information about what students have been doing. It also provides good links to information that families will find helpful in times of crisis.
- Responses from parents to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive to all but one of the questions. Parents did not feel that the right level of homework was being given to students. The school is aware of their concerns and is currently consulting with staff and families about changes to the homework policy.
- The school takes the safeguarding of students seriously. The arrangements meet statutory requirements and are effective in helping students and their families to be safe. Leaders rigorously monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of all students regardless of the location where they are taught.
- Good quality careers guidance ensures that students have appropriate information about future employment and educational opportunities. All students leave the school with a place in education, training, apprenticeship or employment.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Girls, although very few in number, are treated with equal kindness and consideration as boys and achieve no less well. Students told inspectors that if any bullying starts, staff quickly deal with it and that it is alright to be different at this school.
- Some students do not attend school as often as they should. The school has taken stern and swift action to remind parents of their responsibilities. However, the school and local authority are aware that they need to work more closely together to ensure that young people are correctly placed on the school roll so that the school is able to meet all of their needs and that students attend school as often as they can.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body ensures that good teaching is effectively rewarded. It has taken a firm stance on the performance management of teachers and this has eradicated poor teaching. Where it was not good enough, staff have responded to the support provided by the school or have moved on. The governing body and sponsors have an accurate understanding of all aspects of the school. They are provided with information of good quality that they then scrutinise and interrogate to ensure that the school is improving and that money is spent prudently. They have ensured that the pupil premium

money is used wisely and is narrowing the achievement gap between those students who are eligible for it and those who are not.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Disruptions in lessons due to poor behaviour have significantly reduced. Where students' concentration falters for an extended period or their behaviour slips, they are escorted out by another member of staff to help them regain their composure. When this happens, the other students in the class continue to learn, and the person who left the room almost always returns quickly to the class with a good attitude to learning again.
- Staff only give rewards when they are justified. This has made earning them a precious commodity for students. They enjoy earning rewards such as access to the 'VIP lounge' at break time, and students work hard to behave well.
- Some behaviour in lessons is excellent and comparable to the very best seen in any school. For example, students in an archery class showed deep respect for each other after they had shot their arrows by waiting in silence and stillness for others to complete their exercise.
- Incidents are now well recorded and trends are regularly analysed to identify circumstances that have led to slips in behaviour. Resolutions and risk assessments are then put in place to reduce the possibility of reoccurrence.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Unacceptable behaviour is always followed up with suitable consequences. The consistent application of the school's systems of rewards and sanctions means that good manners and respect are now more prevalent. Since November 2014, there have been no exclusions from the school and no need to involve external agencies such as the police. The number and level of physical interventions have also continued to fall.
- Students and their parents reported to the inspectors that they felt safe and well cared for. Inspection evidence supports these views.
- The curriculum and teaching of PSHE have dramatically improved. Students now have a much better understanding about how to keep themselves safe in relationships, including from bullying and domestic violence.
- Students have a good knowledge of e-safety, for example how to keep themselves safe on the internet and know how to act appropriately if they encounter unkind or explicit and/or inappropriate content.
- Attendance has continued to improve because the school has made sure that the curriculum and where students are taught meet their needs. However, some students still do not attend school as often as they should. The school has worked well with mentoring services and other professionals to help support students and their families. The school is aware that more needs to be done in conjunction with the local authority to ensure all students on the school roll are correctly placed in the school and that they attend as often as they can.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have high expectations about the amount of work that students should produce and the quality of it. As a result of the professional development of staff and strong leadership, the teaching of literacy, reading and mathematics has significantly improved. Students have work that is interesting and that is carefully planned to cover the syllabus or scheme they are following. However, it is not always sufficiently challenging for the more able.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and in sufficient detail to enable the students to know what they have done well and where they can improve. All staff consistently apply the school's planning, marking, feedback and record keeping policies. This provides everyone with a comprehensive and clear understanding about how well each student is doing.
- The school does not always have good quality information about students' starting points when they join the school. Through assessment and observation, staff build up a more coherent and holistic picture of each student's needs. This information is kept up to date and the curriculum adjusted, with the aim of meeting any changes in need that the student has.
- Where students join the school and cannot manage to be in school full time, the school works with the

student and their family so that the student learns how to gain resilience so that they can increase the amount of time they attend school. This also works because teachers carefully adjust their teaching to suit the individual learning needs of each student.

- Teachers provide a curriculum that increasingly makes subtle links between different subjects and the world of work. The school's promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is effective. However, students get too few first-hand opportunities to explore the creative arts, such as drama and music, or have sufficient experiences of the world of work. The school is aware of this and good plans are already firmly established to remedy this from September 2015.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The residual impact of previous considerably poor teaching, low attendance and negative attitudes to learning has meant that students in Year 11 have not attained as well as they could. Nevertheless, they have made accelerated progress since September 2014, regardless as to where they have been taught, and as result, 77% are on track to achieve between one and four accredited pass examinations (GCSE or equivalent) and 33% to get five.
- More students have taken a GCSE examination this year than in the past. Students in Years 10 and 11 have individual learning plans that are targeted to ensure students gain qualifications in GCSE, BTEC, and functional skills. Starting in September 2015 the school has widened its range of vocational learning opportunities.
- School records show, and inspection evidence confirms, that students in Years 7 to 10 have made at least good progress since September 2014, including those educated elsewhere. However, students on the main site benefit from interacting with more students and gaining access to the 'VIP' lounge.
- The achievement gap between those students eligible for the pupil premium and others is rapidly closing. The pupil premium funding has been used wisely to help some students be ready to learn through, for example, equine therapy, and to provide specific targeted support to help close gaps in students' learning.
- Parents and students were keen to tell the inspectors about how the provision in the school has changed and that learning is now a focus of the school's work rather than containing and controlling behaviour. They are proud to be members of this school and agree with inspectors that students are making good progress in all aspects of their school lives.
- Students are well prepared for life after school. In food technology, they learn how to cook nutritious meals and how to adjust the types or amount of ingredients in recipes to suit the taste or number of people for whom they are cooking.
- Work in students' books and coursework for examinations show good levels of progression. There is an increase in the expectation of staff and aspirations of students for the level and amount of work produced by students. Students have responded well to these challenges. Books and folders are well presented with clear evidence that students are proud of what they have accomplished. This care is also seen on classroom walls where students' work and displays are respected.
- Students that are more able do not always attain as well as they can. This is because they are not always given sufficiently challenging tasks in all subjects. Part of this is due to the legacy of underperformance and previous lack of understanding about students' starting points.

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

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique reference number | 138429 |
| Local authority | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 454768 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy special sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 22 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Philippa Dancey |
| Headteacher | Mr Richard Lewis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17–18 June 2014 |
| Telephone number | 01453 542130 |
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