

Poynton High School and Performing Arts College

Yew Tree Lane, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire SK12 1PU

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders and governors share high expectations and an unswerving commitment to ensure that every pupil achieves their goals, whatever their circumstances. As a result, the school has made significant improvements since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Underachievement is swiftly tackled because leaders accurately monitor learning and provide timely support.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs is good because of carefully tailored additional support.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well and plan work that challenges and engages most groups of pupils so that learning is consistently good. Assessment systems generally help pupils to improve their work.
- Pupils feel safe and are proud of their school. They take responsibility for the safety of themselves and others. Their behaviour is good and many have exemplary attitudes to learning.
- The curriculum is carefully tailored to meet the needs of pupils and supports their good achievement. Through the wide enrichment activities, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively fostered, as well as their appreciation and understanding of British values.
- The sixth form provides rich experiences that prepare learners effectively for their next stage of education or employment. Many go on to their first choice universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. The achievement, teaching and the fostering of the personal development of learners are good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Opportunities are sometimes missed to stretch the most-able pupils, to ensure pupils' misconceptions are addressed, to use homework effectively and to promote literacy across all subjects.
- A minority of parents report that the school does not always communicate effectively with them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the effectiveness of teaching on pupils' learning by:
 - Ensuring that teachers always plan lessons that stretch and support all pupils, and particularly the most able, so that they rapidly develop higher-level knowledge, skills and understanding
 - ensuring that where extra challenge is set, teachers mark and acknowledge this additional work
 - making sure that appropriate homework is used to extend and consolidate learning for pupils
 - improving the effectiveness of the school's marking policy so that pupils' misconceptions are addressed
 - requiring all departments to promote the development of pupils' literacy within their subject areas.
- Seek to broaden and further improve lines of communication with parents.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and, together with strong support from the leadership team, has secured considerable improvements since the last inspection. The entire leadership structure has been reorganised so that there are clear lines of responsibility. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher and leadership team have put in place robust systems for improving the pupils' progress. They are well supported by middle leaders, who share the school's vision and are very clear about their responsibilities.
- Staff are committed to the school and its continued progress. The headteacher has invested heavily in staff development and in providing training and support for staff, along with many opportunities for gaining leadership experience. As a result, the quality of teaching over time has improved, along with improvements in the leadership of teaching and learning. Teachers are held accountable for the progress that their pupils make and salary increments are only made when teachers meet their performance management targets.
- Middle leaders are highly effective and play a key role in improving the school. They hold staff to account and set high expectations for the quality of teaching and learning. The sharing of good practice has become the norm. Meetings between departments now focus on improving teaching practice and pupil progress rather than being merely occasions to disseminate information. Across the school there is a strong dialogue of pupils' learning.
- Careful tracking of pupils' progress means that the school is able to quickly identify where extra support is required and then provide it. Different leaders take responsibility for providing support for groups such as disadvantaged pupils, underachieving boys, any pupils thought to be likely to miss their GCSE targets and any other such groups.
- Pastoral and welfare leadership is very strong. The school carefully monitors the impact of its actions on pupils' behaviour and well-being. Leaders have extensive links with other agencies and make well-thought-out plans for pupils who require additional nurturing and care.
- A new special educational needs coordinator has driven significant improvements in the care, welfare and progress of pupils with additional needs. Progress is tracked robustly and individual pupils' needs are discussed with the pupils and parents; as a result, the progress of these pupils in English and mathematics in particular is increasing. A governor is very active in challenging and supporting this area of the school's work.
- The school has considered carefully how to make best use of the pupil premium (funding which is provided to support pupils known to be entitled to receive free school meals and children looked after by the local authority). School data show that the gap between pupils entitled to support through the funding and others in school was almost eliminated in 2014 but widened again slightly in 2015. There was only a small cohort of pupils in 2015 and a close examination of their progress and support plans shows that most made good progress. The funding is mainly used to provide extra, tailored support for disadvantaged pupils who need help to make the best progress.
- The curriculum is well matched to pupils' abilities and provides a full range of opportunities to learn in a full range of subjects. Most pathways are academic, with a small number of vocational courses. The proportion of pupils eligible for the English Baccalaureate qualification is above average. Numerous clubs provide enrichment opportunities in sports and the creative arts. The school is one of the largest centres in the country for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- The curriculum and enrichment opportunities lead to very effective personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for most pupils. Pupils have a good awareness of religious and social diversity through religious studies, history, English and geography in particular. Citizenship lessons ensure that they develop an understanding of the core British values. Student development days provide opportunities for an entire day to be devoted to aspects of personal development and citizenship. The school is working in collaboration with two other local secondary schools on the Gateway Project to become a centre for emotional well-being. The other schools will focus on behaviour management and skills and learning. The aim is to build pupils' resilience and ability to manage stress. Pupils have regular access to useful information and guidance about future choices and careers.
- The great majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and online comments were very positive in their praise of the school's work, as were the many parents who met the inspectors during the inspection. However, a significant minority said that they felt that communications between school and

parents could be improved. The vast majority of responses from all parents indicated that they were confident that their children were safe.

- The local authority holds the school and the headteacher in high regard, and has only needed to provide support when asked to do so by the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Since the last inspection, the governing body has undertaken a complete review of how it operates and has formally reconstituted its membership. As a result, governors are now very effectively holding the school to account, finding out for themselves what is happening in school and setting very high expectations for leaders and managers. Different governors are linked to different departments and so have a much better understanding of how the school works and where there are any weaker areas.
 - Governors fully understand progress data and know about the effectiveness of teaching and learning. They ensure that the financial management of the school is secure and that the pupil premium funding is spent for the benefit of pupils.
 - Governors take a rigorous approach to performance management. In partnership with the headteacher, they are fully involved in development planning.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All statutory policies and procedures are followed. The school recently commissioned a safeguarding review, conducted by the local authority and pupils themselves, which concluded that the school provides a welcoming and safe environment. The vast majority of parents who responded to recent questionnaires fully agreed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers know their pupils well. This allows them to use their subject expertise to question pupils very effectively to extend their learning and check understanding, knowledge and skill development.
- Teachers' planning for pupils' learning is effective in the vast majority of subjects. Lesson time and resources are used well to engage and interest pupils. Because of this, most pupils enjoy lessons and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils so that they demand, and usually receive, pupils' best efforts. Teaching over time, as seen in the work in pupils' books and their achievement record over several years, has led to attainment which is well above average, and the majority of pupils making good progress.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well. They work effectively with class teachers to support the learning of individuals and small groups. They make a valuable contribution to the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and, increasingly, disadvantaged pupils. They sometimes work on a one-to-one basis so that these pupils make progress that is at least in line with others in school.
- Teachers generally mark pupils' work well and provide guidance for improvement. Most pupils take on board this guidance and improve their work accordingly. However, on occasions the school's marking policy is not applied effectively because some pupils do not learn from their teachers' feedback which results in them repeating the same mistakes in subsequent work.
- Many subjects use a 'stretch and challenge' strategy or 'first finisher' tasks so that the most-able and faster-working pupils can go further in their learning. This is an effective strategy, but not all subjects do this and sometimes pupils have completed an additional challenge but it is not acknowledged by the teacher. Where challenge is provided, such as in English and modern foreign languages, pupils make rapid progress.
- There is too little evidence of homework and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. Some homework is set online but it is not always recorded in books. Opportunities are therefore sometimes missed to extend and consolidate learning.
- Teachers in English actively promote pupils' skills in literacy through the reading challenges, use of display of key words and by providing numerous opportunities for pupils to read aloud. Although other departments such as the humanities subjects and modern foreign languages also promote literacy, this is not the case across all subjects. Teachers in mathematics and science promote numeracy effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning by their interest and enthusiasm in class and their participation in a wide range of enrichment activities. Pupils are generally confident and feel well cared for. They are proud of their school.
- Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to school development and leadership. In an initiative led by pupils, the school has become an 'educate and celebrate' best practice centre for its work on ensuring that homophobic bullying or negativity is not tolerated. In January, learners in the sixth form will take leading roles on a student development day aimed at promoting tolerance and diversity.
- The vast majority of pupils feel safe and report that they are well informed about different ways of keeping safe. They understand the dangers of drug abuse, including alcohol, and how to stay safe online and when using social media. The school is alert to the dangers of radicalisation and committed to the promotion of British values. The school carries out regular surveys among pupils to gauge their knowledge and understanding of risk and how to manage risky situations.
- The school is looking forward to a new strategy in January, the Gateway Project, when, in partnership with two other local secondary schools, it will become a centre for promoting pupils' resilience and emotional well-being. The Gateway Project is designed to meet the needs of pupils in terms of emotional well-being, behaviour, skills and learning.
- The vast majority of pupils report that they are free from bullying. Where bullying has occurred, pupils believe that the school deals with it effectively so that it stops. Most of the parents who commented on bullying made the same point.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour in lessons is consistently good so that learning is rarely interrupted.
- Pupils' behaviour around school is generally good. Pupils are courteous and polite when meeting visitors and are keen to offer assistance. Occasionally, behaviour can be lively in corridors when a large number of pupils move about the school, but it is not unruly or intimidating. Some poor behaviour on school buses has occurred recently. When this happened, the senior leaders responded swiftly with a range of measures, including the accompanying of the bus, with random checks along the route.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is low.
- There have been no permanent exclusions recently and the number of fixed-term exclusions is below average.
- Senior leaders carefully check the progress, attendance, behaviour and well-being of the small minority of pupils who attend elsewhere.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are above the national average. Over time, the proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE level, including English and mathematics, has been significantly above the national average.
- The school experienced a dip in examination results in English language in 2015, when the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C in English fell. The school responded by requesting a whole-centre re-mark from the examination board. While many pupils' grades went up, very few increased from grade D to grade C. Results for the same cohort of pupils were well above average in English literature. The school has responded to the dip quickly and is taking steps to make sure that achievement this year is on an upward trend.
- Currently, Year 11 are making strong progress. Convincing tracking data provided by the school, as well as a review of the work in pupils' books, indicate that pupils are making good progress in both English and mathematics and that standards will return to the significantly above-average levels achieved in 2014.
- Attainment in the majority of subjects at GCSE in grades A* to C is higher than national averages. Pupils make particularly good progress in the sciences, modern foreign languages and the humanities subjects,

such as history, geography and religious education. Many pupils study two foreign languages and three sciences. However, the school has recognised that slightly lower levels of literacy, particularly skills in extended writing, may be one reason why results were lower in 2015.

- The most-able pupils make good progress in all subjects. Their writing makes good use of subject-specific vocabulary and explains complex ideas well. The proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades at GCSE is above the national average.
- The school is working well to narrow the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding and others in school. In 2014, the gap was almost eliminated and pupils' progress in English, maths, sciences, languages and humanities subjects improved so that it matched others in school and other pupils nationally. The gap widened slightly in 2015. This was a very small group of pupils and a close review of their progress records shows that each pupil received strong support. Currently, the disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are making good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs usually make good progress because teachers plan their work carefully and provide extra support tailored to their needs. The school has significantly improved the support for these pupils but recognises that there is more to be done to accelerate progress so that the gap between their achievement and others nationally is narrowed.
- Pupils eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding make good progress in developing their basic skills in numeracy and literacy because of effective teaching and intensive support.
- School tracking records and recent assessments show that pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are making good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- The emphasis on reading through the reading challenge in Key Stage 3 is beneficial in promoting pupils' literacy. Every pupil in Years 7, 8 and 9 is challenged to read 30 books in each year.
- Strong skills in basic numeracy support the good achievement of pupils in all three science subjects.
- The very small number of pupils in Year 11 who study part time and off-site make good progress because of good-quality, well-tailored provision. Next year, the school does not intend to have any pupils attending alternative provision.
- Pupils leave Year 11 very well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The achievement of learners in the sixth form is good. Standards are high at AS level and above average for A level qualifications. The proportion of learners who gain A* and A grades is above average. A minority of learners follow vocational courses where they achieve as well as those on academic courses. Nearly all learners complete the courses they start so that retention rates are above average. The small minority who need extra support in English and mathematics are successful and are able to go on to a range of future options. The work of learners in files and folders shows that this good achievement is continuing.
- Teaching is good in the sixth form and there is no consistent pattern of subjects where learners underachieve. Any teachers who fall short of targets are given intensive support to improve.
- Learners speak highly of the pastoral support they enjoy. They know that there is always useful guidance on any personal issues they may have and they feel very confident to talk to teachers about any problems.
- Learners confirm that poor behaviour is never an issue. They enjoy the independence of being in the sixth form but know that punctuality and attendance are important. Learners have a very positive attitude to their studies and are ambitious.
- The sixth form curriculum meets the requirements for 16–19 study and equips learners well for life after school.
- Learners speak highly of the extensive facilities that they enjoy and treat their environment with respect. They appreciate all that is provided for them and show great responsibility in making a strong contribution to the life of the school through many voluntary activities such as mentoring younger pupils and working in the local community supporting information technology for older citizens. Their high-profile and positive attitudes to learning set the tone for the rest of the school.
- Learners speak highly of the careers advice that they have access to and which helps them to make well-informed career choices. Every learner receives advice and support with university applications. Some have very useful work placements to support their future university applications.

- The sixth form provides many opportunities for enrichment, which include numerous visits, for example to the House of Lords, university conferences and open days, and trips abroad to India, where the school supports an orphanage, and on World Challenge expeditions to Kenya and Venezuela.
- Nearly 80% of learners go on to their first choice university. Others are successful with their other choices and a very small minority find a university place through clearing. The sixth form makes a strong contribution to the learners' wider experience through opportunities for work experience, an aspect that the school is keen to develop further. Nearly every student is enabled to go on to further study, employment or training.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders of this successful sixth form are constantly seeking ways to enhance learners' experiences and to lead to even greater achievement. Parents are involved at many stages and are kept well informed about the progress of their children.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 111436 |
| Local authority | Cheshire East |
| Inspection number | 10010080 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,504 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 287 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mike Bird |
| Headteacher | David Waugh |
| Telephone number | 01625 871811 |
| Website | www.phs.cheshire.sch.uk |
| Email address | info@phs.cheshire.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 21–22 January 2014 |

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school, and has a sixth form.
- The great majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as a second language is low.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is low.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A very small number of students attend off-site alternative provision at Stockport College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in most subjects and across all age groups except Year 11, who were sitting examinations. Some learning was observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with groups of students from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. They spoke to many learners in the sixth form. They spoke informally to many other pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, in lessons and at tutor time.
- No lessons took place on the second day of the inspection because the school was holding a pupil progress day. Inspectors spoke informally to many parents and their children throughout the day.
- Inspectors sampled work in pupils' books in all year groups and particularly in Year 11, across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science and the humanities.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and representatives from the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with the School Improvement Partner and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents. These included information relating to safeguarding and child protection, attendance and behaviour, development planning, subject planning, tracking information on students' progress, performance management systems and procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The views of staff were gained from the 34 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents from 266 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and from meeting parents on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

| | |
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| Judith Straw, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Claire Hollister | Ofsted Inspector |
| Liz Kelly | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jan Rowney | Ofsted Inspector |
| Lenford White | Ofsted Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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